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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

On the Perfection of Anatomy

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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL VOL. 17:
ON THE PERFECTION OF ANATOMY
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This volume collects issues one hundred twelve through one hundred seventeen of the Dark Horse comic-book series *Blade of the Immortal.*

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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

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On the Perfection of Anatomy

DARK HORSE MANGA™

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Swastika
The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crooked cross"—or *swastika*, from the Sanskrit *svastika*, meaning "well being"—as his name and personal emblem. This symbol of prosperity and good fortune was common throughout the ancient world. In Japan, the counterclockwise-pointing *sauvastika* is called the *manji* and has symbolized Buddhism since ancient times. Readers should understand that the swastika has ancient and honorable origins, and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century. *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story.*

The Artwork
While *Blade of the Immortal* is a Westernized (left-right reading) manga, author Hiroaki Samura requested that we avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Instead, the pages are reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and re-pasting them in reverse order. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue
Some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the illustrations, and those have been left in their original Japanese. In addition, *Blade*'s dialogue is quite different from typical samurai manga and is one of the features that has made *Blade* such a hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles, with some characters speaking in the mannered style of old Japan while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns in the original Japanese text.

GLOSSARY

agari-zashiki: a special cell for imprisoning high-ranking soldiers

Ainu: natives of the Japanese archipelago who were driven north by today's modern Japanese population, now found only on the northern main island of Hokkaidō

bangashira: head of the *banshū*

banshū: officers serving under the shōgun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the shōgun himself

daimyō: the lords of provincial feudal fiefs known as *han*

dōjō: a school for martial arts training; here, for swordsmanship

dono: archaic honorific used to show respect, usually for someone of higher rank

dōshin: low-ranking police officers

Edo: capital of pre-modern Japan, later renamed Tokyo

Ezo: Edo-period name for northern lands inhabited by the Ainu, sometimes used to refer to the Ainu themselves

fusama: sliding doors made of wood and rice paper

han: a feudal domain

Hanasaka Jii: a popular children's story immortalized in Edo-period picture books

hashi: chopsticks

ikidō: live human torsos

Ittō-ryū: the radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa

jitte-mochi: literally "*jitte* carrier"; a term for policeman, referring to the three-pronged truncheon, or *jitte*, carried by Edo police

Kaizō Shigi: Ayame Burando's journal

kanpo: Chinese-based medicine, relying hevily on medicinal plants

Kara: archaic term for China, referring to the Tang Dynasty

kessen-chu: mystical bloodworms that can heal all wounds and grant their host virtual immortality

kuzuyu: kudzu root broth

Mutenichi-ryū: the sword school led by Rin's father (now deceased), destroyed by Anotsu Kagehisa

nagaya: literally, "long house." Many commoners in Edo had plain, single rooms in these long, single-story houses.

otonpuikina: Ainu word for *Chelidonium majus* (kusanoō in Japanese), a medicinal herb used to treat a wide range of conditions

ryū: a sword school

shaku: Edo-period measurement, approximately 2.5 meters

shippaku: a rich, boiled-noodle dish

soba: buckwheat noodles

Sumida: river bordering Edo

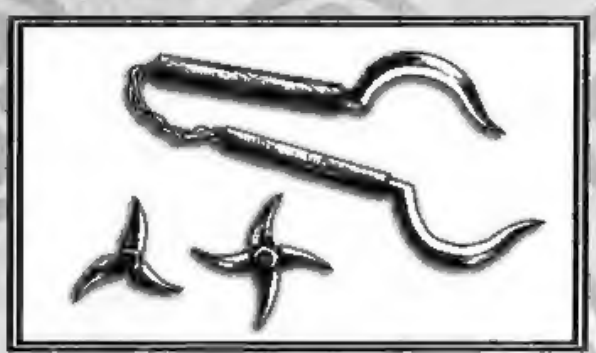
tameshigiri: the test of a sword's cutting edge, usually on the body of a convict

tatami: a thick, rice straw mat used as flooring

toshū: leader, master

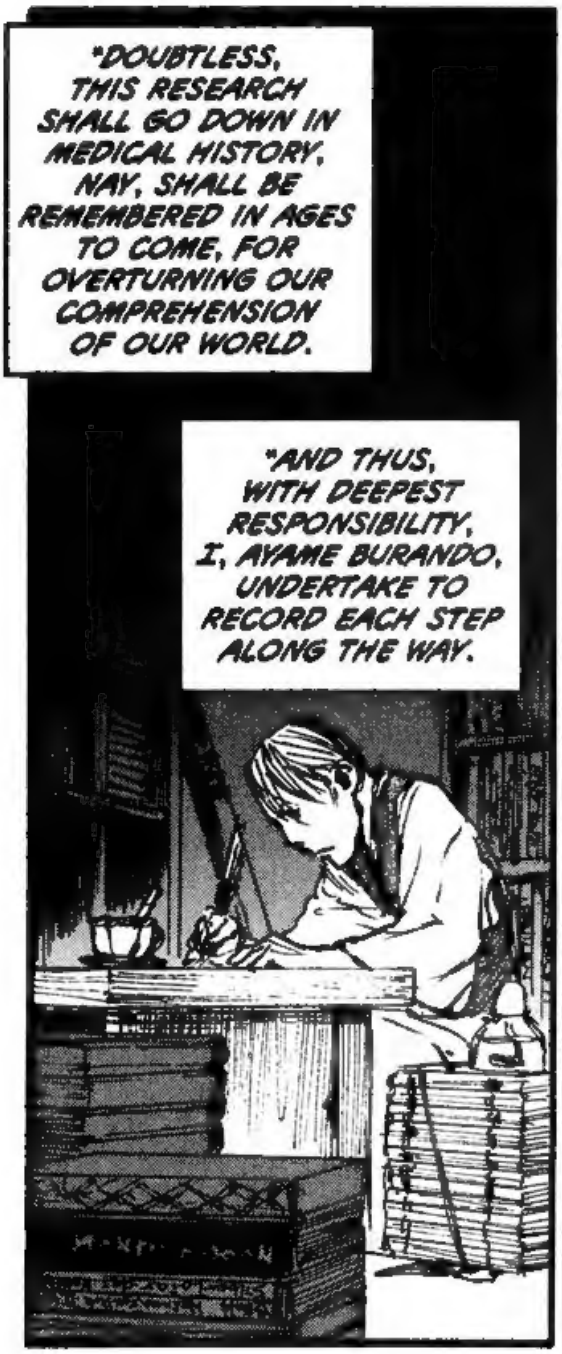
Yamada Asaemon: nicknamed *Kubikiri Asa*, the shōgun's executioner was a master swordsman, sword tester, and an expert at beheading and cutting human bodies

yorikiri: middle-ranked samurai who dealt with criminal or judicial affairs

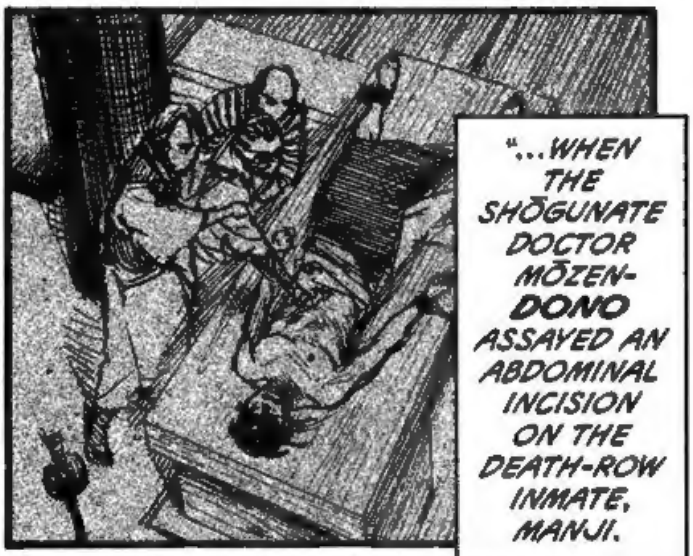


ON THE PERFECTION
OF ANATOMY
Part 1

"KAIZŌ SHIGI
"BY AYAME BURANDO

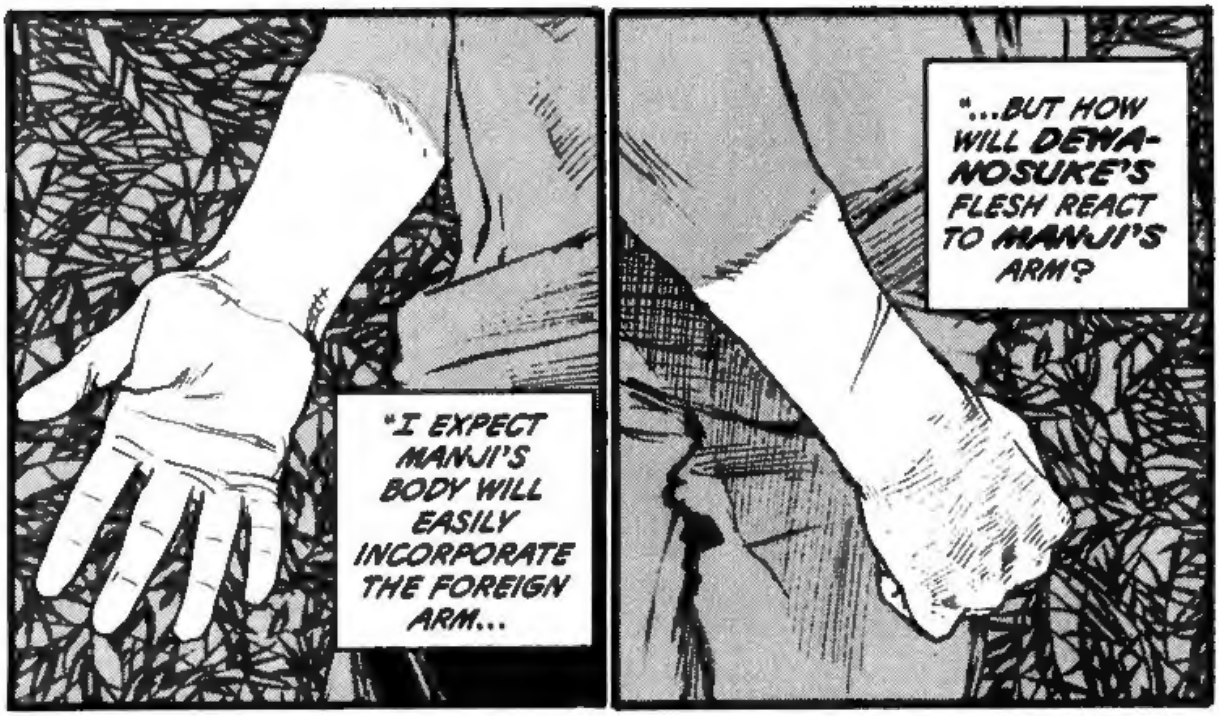

"DOUBTLESS, THIS RESEARCH SHALL GO DOWN IN MEDICAL HISTORY, NAY, SHALL BE REMEMBERED IN AGES TO COME, FOR OVERTURNING OUR COMPREHENSION OF OUR WORLD.
"AND THUS, WITH DEEPEST RESPONSIBILITY, I, AYAME BURANDO, UNDERTAKE TO RECORD EACH STEP ALONG THE WAY.

"IT BEGAN THESE FIVE DAYS PAST...

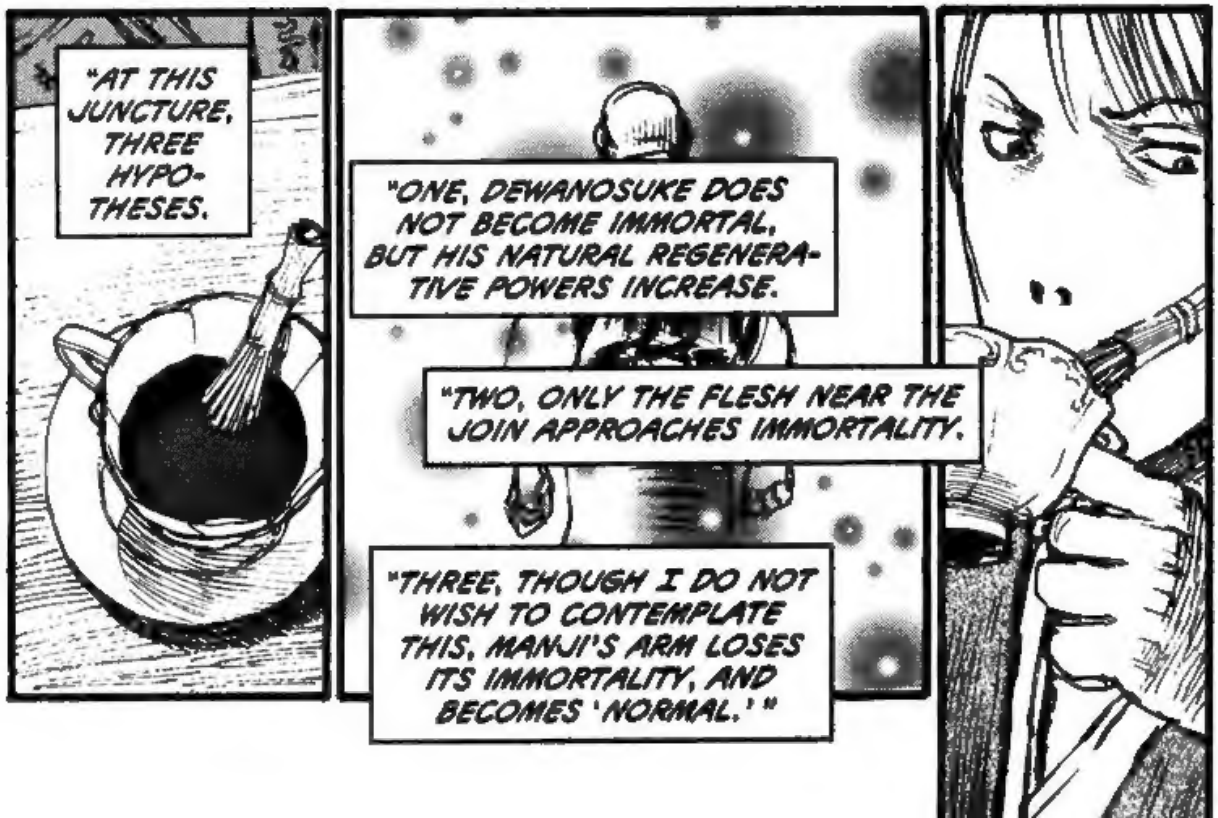

"...WHEN THE SHŌGUNATE DOCTOR MŌZEN-DONO ASSAYED AN ABDOMINAL INCISION ON THE DEATH-ROW INMATE, MANJI.

"THAT SIGHT HAD NO PARALLEL, NOT ONLY IN MY LIFE, BUT IN ALL TIMES AND ALL LANDS.

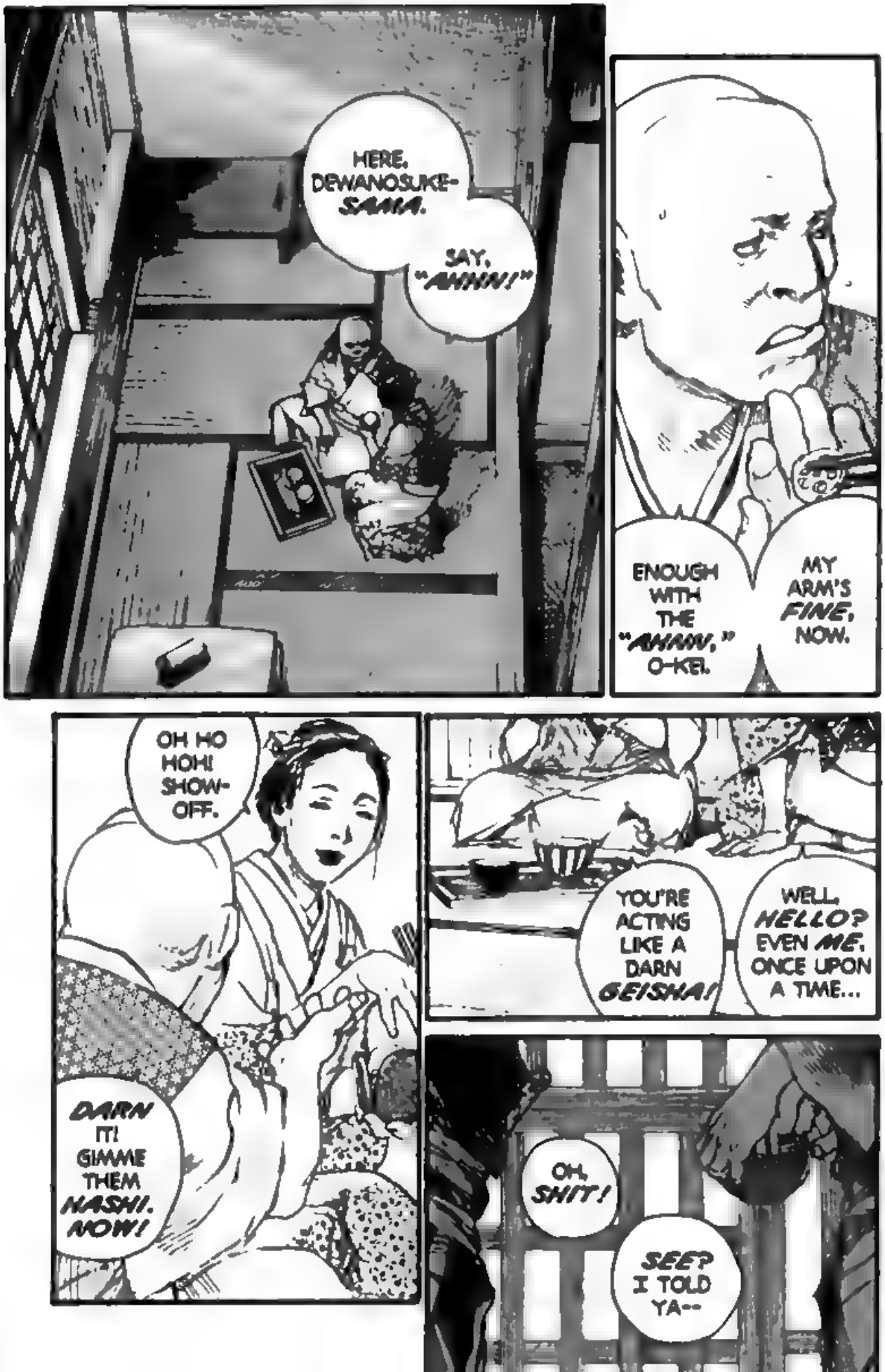
"GIVEN A NORMAL PERSON, A SEVERED FINGER CAN BE REJOINED IF ONE MOVES QUICKLY.
"AN ARM OR LEG, IMPOSSIBLE.
"YET THIS MAN'S MEDIATIVE ABILITY...
"...CAN FUSE ANY FLESH, HIS OWN OR ANOTHER'S!
"AND YET...
"...THOUGH MY RECENT ATTEMPT TO EXCHANGE TWO MEN'S ARMS APPEARS SUCCESSFUL...
"...A NEW HURDLE LOOMS.


"I EXPECT MANJI'S BODY WILL EASILY INCORPORATE THE FOREIGN ARM...
"...BUT HOW WILL DEWANOSUKE'S FLESH REACT TO MANJI'S ARM?

"MY OPTIMAL OUTCOME? A CHAIN REACTION. IMMORTALITY SPREADING THROUGHOUT HIS BODY FROM MANJI'S ARM.
"I DARE NOT HOPE... BUT STILL...
"...I PRAY FOR THIS TRANSFORMATION.


"AT THIS JUNCTURE, THREE HYPOTHESES.
"ONE, DEWANOSUKE DOES NOT BECOME IMMORTAL, BUT HIS NATURAL REGENERATIVE POWERS INCREASE.
"TWO, ONLY THE FLESH NEAR THE JOIN APPROACHES IMMORTALITY.
"THREE, THOUGH I DO NOT WISH TO CONTEMPLATE THIS, MANJI'S ARM LOSES ITS IMMORTALITY, AND BECOMES 'NORMAL.'"

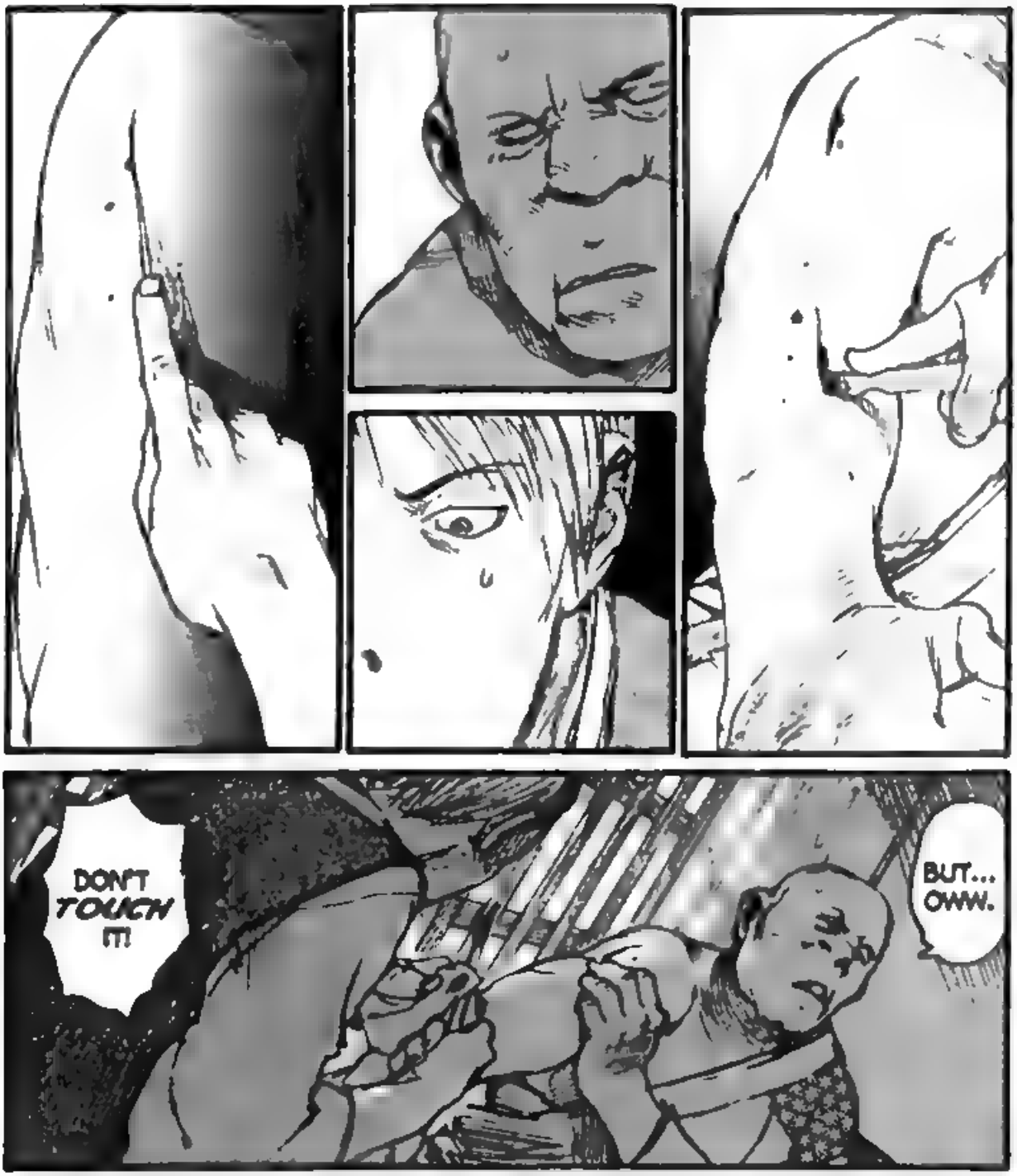
...BITTER.
DELI-CIOUS!
NO!
HABAKI-DONO. HOW ON EARTH...
...DO YOU PROPOSE TO USE THIS ?


HERE, DEWANOSUKE-SAMA.
SAY, "AHHN!"
ENOUGH WITH THE "AHHN," O-KEI.
MY ARM'S FINE, NOW.
OH HO HOH! SHOW-OFF.
DARN IT! GIMME THEM NASHI. NOW!
YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A DARN GEISHA!
WELL, HELLO? EVEN ME, ONCE UPON A TIME...
OH, SHIT!
SEE? I TOLD YA--

PLEASANT MEAL, DEWA-NOSUKE?
AH?!
OH, UH, YEAH, ACTUAL-LY...
SO, LIFE UP HERE SUITS YOU?
CAN'T COMPLAIN, SIR.
TATAMI FOR MY BUTT, GOOD GRUB IN MY TUM, SWEET LITTLE LADY TO FEED ME.
I FEEL BAD FOR MY MAN MANJI...
...BUT IT'S LIKE, HEAVEN AND HELL. BETTER'N MY OLD NAGAYA, FOR SURE...
HOW NICE... BUT A REMINDER.
I CAN'T TELL YOU WHERE THAT UNDERGROUND CELL IS... BUT FOR NOW, YOU ARE IN KODENMA PRISON.

THERE'S NO GUARD AT YOUR DOOR, BUT TAKE ONE STEP OUTSIDE...
...AND THE WALLS ARE HIGH, THE MOAT WIDE. FIFTY DŌSHIN UNDER WARDEN ISHIDE TATEWAKI ARE WATCHING, MORNING AND NIGHT.
DON'T EVEN THINK OF ESCAPING AGAIN.
YESSIR! YOU SORTA PUT THE FEAR OF GOD IN ME.
HEH.
CAN YOU MOVE YOUR RIGHT HAND?
HUH? OH...

TAKE A GANDER.
SUCCESS!
YOU! RETURN TO THE CASTLE.
AH, AND CLEAN UP THIS MESS.
UH... DOC?
I WON'T CUT DEEP. RELAX.


DON'T TOUCH IT!
BUT... OWW.

HABAKI-
DONO...
BEHOLD...!

THE SECOND CUT IS CLOSING ALREADY.
AND WHERE WE ATTACHED MANJI'S ARM...
...JUST SOME BRUISING.
THIS, HABAKI-DOWO, MEANS THAT THE REGENERATIVE EFFECT HAS JUMPED THE SUTURE LINE...
...INTO DEWA-NOSUKE'S BODY.
I SEE...

...AND YET, INADEQUATE.
ABSO-LUTELY!
THIS IS A PALE SHADOW OF MANJI'S POWER.
LOOK HERE.
AND YET...
...THOUGH FAR FROM IDEAL, THE RESULTS FALL WITHIN PREDICTED PARAMETERS.
WE CAN SAY THIS PROCEDURE... WORKS.
THE ABILITY TO REGEN-ERATE FLESH...
...FOR CONVENIENCE, LET'S CALL IT "IMMORTALITY."
THREE DAYS, AND IT HASN'T REACHED THE SHOULDER.

WE'LL KEEP GOING.
TOMORROW, THE LEFT ARM. NEXT, THE RIGHT ARM. AS WE REPLACE EACH LIMB...
...I THEORIZE THAT IN TIME HE'LL BE VIRTUALLY IMMORTAL.
HRMM...
WHAT A... TEDIOUS PROSPECT.
AS I KEEP REPEATING, HABAKI-DONO! IMMORTALITY, LIKE PER-PETUAL YOUTH...
...IS A CASTLE IN THE AIR. A MIRACLE!
IF SOMEONE GUARANTEES YOU A MIRACLE...
...A YEAR OR TWO IS NOTHING.
POINT MADE, BURANDO. YET--
HRM! UHH... JUST A SEC.
SO, FROM NOW ON, LIFE'S GONNA BE ABOUT GETTING MY ARMS AND LEGS CHOPPED OFF...
...WITHOUT ANESTHETIC, EVERY DAY?

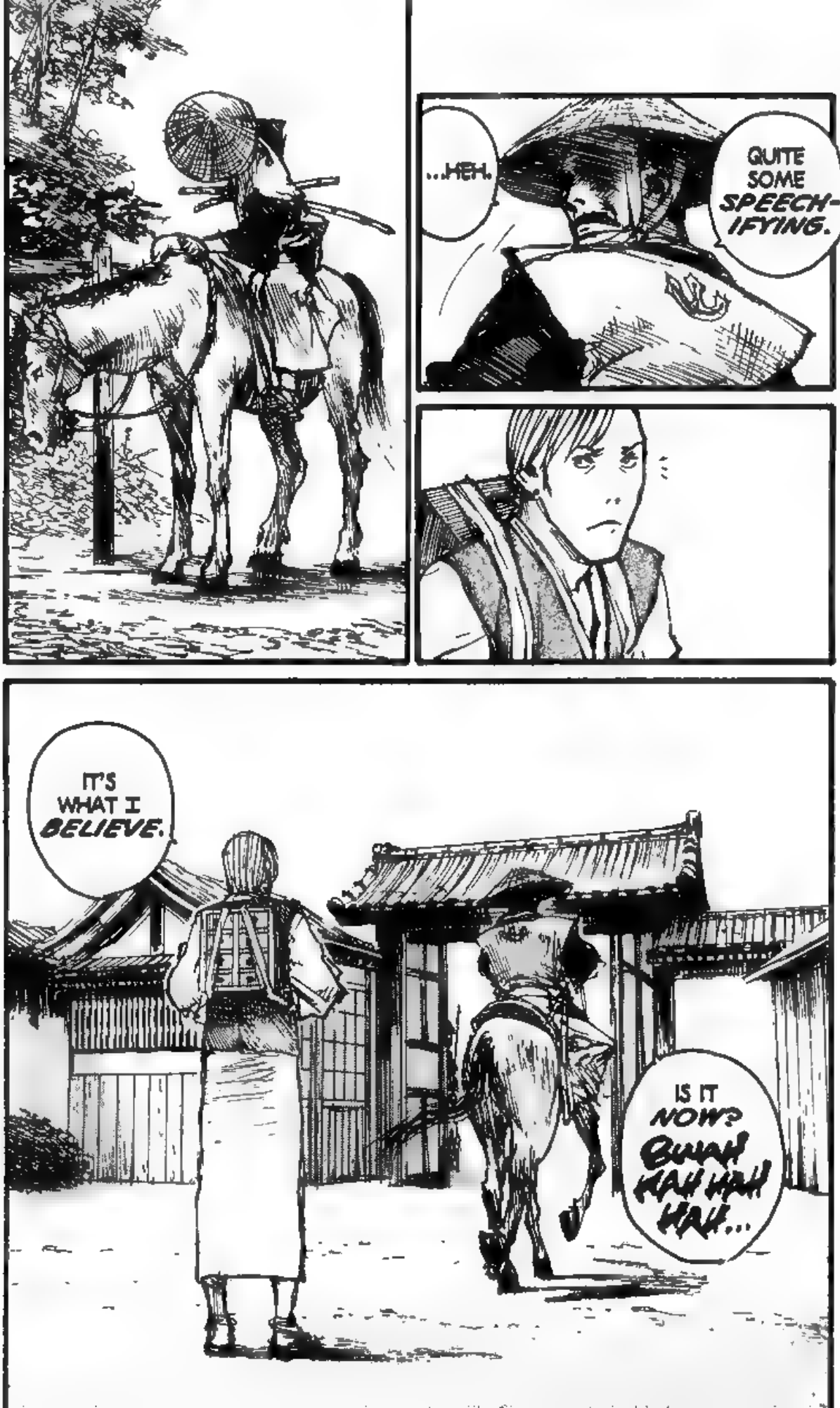
YOU LORD-LY FOLK MAY NOT GET IT...
...BUT HAVING 'EM CUT OFF IN FRONT OF YOUR OWN EYES...IT'S CREEPY. IT HURTS. IT'S MORE'N I CAN BEAR.
DO IT OVER AND OVER AGAIN...
...AN' MY BODY AND NOGGIN'S GONNA BREAK.
YOU WOULDN'T WANT THAT, DOC. RIGHT?
I'M BEGGIN' YOU! PUT ME OUT COLD SOMEHOW, LIKE THE LAST DOC DID.
ARE YOU DIS-SATISFIED WITH THE QUARTERS?
I CAN'T DO THAT. YET, IF EITHER OF YOU ARE IN PERIL, I WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU.
NAW, NOT ME...
...BUT MISTER MANJI, HE'S STILL IN THAT DUN-GEON.

AN' DOC, SOMETIMES YOU GET CARRIED AWAY.
LIKE, WHO CARES ABOUT TWO DEATH-ROW CONVICTS--
DON'T BE ABSURD!
NO ONE WANTS TO KILL YOU!
YOU DON'T LIKE THAT DUNGEON, I'LL TURN THIS AGARI-ZASHIKI INTO AN OPER-ATING ROOM!
D-DOC...?
DEWANOSUKE, YOU LISTEN TO ME! I'M NOT MAKING YOU IMMORTAL BECAUSE I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
HARSH, BUT TRUE!

MY WORRY...
...IS THIS COUNTRY'S MEDICINE!
WHAT WE CALL MEDICINE TODAY..?
IT'S JUST KANPŌ, IMPORTED FROM KARA CENTURIES AGO.
AND EVEN THAT'S BEEN DILUTED, RITUALIZED, TURNED INTO MAGIC!
SO DISTORTED IT'S ALMOST USELESS!
AND AS FOR SURGICAL PROCEDURES? EVEN THE KOI DOCTORS WHO BLATHER ABOUT CLINICAL MEDICINE?
FULL OF THEMSELVES ABOUT A SINGLE DISSECTION! THEY'RE OUR CUTTING EDGE?! PATHETIC!
DEWA-NOSUKE! YOU MUST HAVE BEEN THERE!
WATCHING A PARENT, A SIBLING, A FRIEND DYING OF AN ILLNESS OR INJURY, WITH NO HELP AT ALL!
WHEN ANY DOCTOR WORTH HIS SALT COULD HAVE SAVED THEM!
ILLNESSES THAT DON'T EVEN KILL ANYMORE IN THE BARBARIAN LANDS GO WITHOUT TREATMENT IN JAPAN. THERE'S EXAMPLE AFTER EXAMPLE!

BUT IF I PERFECT THIS PROCEDURE...? JAPANESE MEDICINE WILL TRANSCEND THE BARBARIANS' IN A SINGLE BOUND.
ISN'T THAT A MAGNIFICENT PROSPECT? I WANT TO GIVE LIFE... LIFE... TO PEOPLE WHO SHOULDN'T HAVE TO DIE.
PLEASE UNDER-STAND!
.....
.....
.....
OF COURSE, HABAKI-DONO...
...MUST HAVE HIS OWN REASONS.
BUT THOSE REASONS, I'D WAGER...
...DON'T CONCERN YOUR LIFE.
ONLY THIS! THIS I TELL YOU!
I'M NOT FIDDLING WITH YOUR BODY FOR FUN, DEWA-NOSUKE!

I'M NOT JUST SCRIBBLING DOWN RESULTS!
I'M GAMBLING MY LIFE AS A DOCTOR THAT WE'LL SUCCEED!
SO IF YOUR LIFE SEEMS IN DANGER...
...I WILL DO ALL IN MY POWER TO SAVE YOU.
BE IT HERE, OR DOWN IN THAT DUNGEON...
...THERE IS NO ONE AS CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR WELFARE AS I AM.


...HEH.
QUITE SOME SPEECH-IFYING.
IT'S WHAT I BELIEVE.
IS IT NOW? GUAH HAH HAH HAH...

KARU-KOZAWA-SAN. WHAT KIND OF MAN IS "KUBIKIRI ASA"?
WHAT KIND...? WELL, A FRIEND AT KODENMA-CHŌ PRISON TELLS ME HE'S...
EIGHT SH-SH-SHAKU TALL?!
NO, I'M JOKING.
BUT ACTUALLY, I'VE PASSED BY HIS PLACE LOTS OF TIMES.
HE'S GOT A GIANT COMPOUND IN HIRAKAWA-CHŌ.
REALLY? IT'S BIG?
WELL, OF COURSE! HE'S NOT JUST RAKING IT IN FROM TAMESHI-GIRI AND SWORD APPRAISING.
HE'S ALSO SELLING MEDICINE ON THE SIDE. AND THAT STUFF'S FLYING OFF THE SHELVES.
OH, RIGHT. I'VE HEARD ABOUT THAT.
ONLY, WHAT I DON'T GET IS, IF IT'S SELLING SO WELL, WHY DOESN'T HE STOP ALL THAT DECAPITATING AND TAMESHIGIRI STUFF?
HE COULD LIVE JUST FINE OFF HIS MEDICINE.
YES! YOU'RE SHARP, TORAEMON! BUT THERE'S A REASON.
I SHOULDN'T SAY THIS OUT LOUD, BUT...

...THE RUMOR IS... THE KEY INGREDIENT...?
IT'S... HUMAN LIVER!
WHAATT?!
MY... MY... MY LITTLE SISTER!
SHE TOOK THAT STUFF FOR HER TUBERCULOSIS!
DID SHE...? WELL, IF IT CURED HER, SO BE IT.
BUT LIKE I WAS SAYING, BETWEEN THE MEDICINE AND HIS FEES, YAMADA'S RAKING IN AS MUCH AS SOME DAIMYŌ.
THEY SAY HIS MANSION'S ONE BIG PARTY HOUSE, WHAT WITH HIS STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES AND THEIR MACHI-GEISHA...
OH, MY GAWD! WITH MONEY FROM HUMAN LIVERS!
THEY'RE ALL MONSTERS!
NOW, NOT SO FAST.
YOU'D THINK THAT FROM WHAT I'VE TOLD YOU, BUT THERE'S A REASON FOLK RESPECT HIM.
THEY SAY HE FEELS SO GUILTY ABOUT ALL THE KILLING, EVEN THE FELONS, THAT HE CAN'T SLEEP. ALL THAT PARTYING, FOR NOTHING.
URMM... MAYBE SO, BUT...
...I CAN'T SAY I LIKE IT...

TORA-EMON!
CAN'T YOU GET ME SOME SHIPPAKU OR SOME-THING SOMETIME?
TODAY SARDINES, YESTERDAY MACKEREL, NOTHING BUT DAMNED DRIED FISH.
YES, SIR... BUT...
...I D-DON'T DECIDE THE MENU...
STOP BITCH-ING, YOU!
I HAVEN'T HAD ANY-THING BUT SOBA SINCE THEY POSTED ME HERE!
WHAT'S THE RACKET?
OH, SEN-SEI!
UHM...? YOU DIDN'T RUN INTO YAMADA ASAEMON-DONO?
THEY SENT WORD THIS MORNING HE'D BE HERE--

AWAN

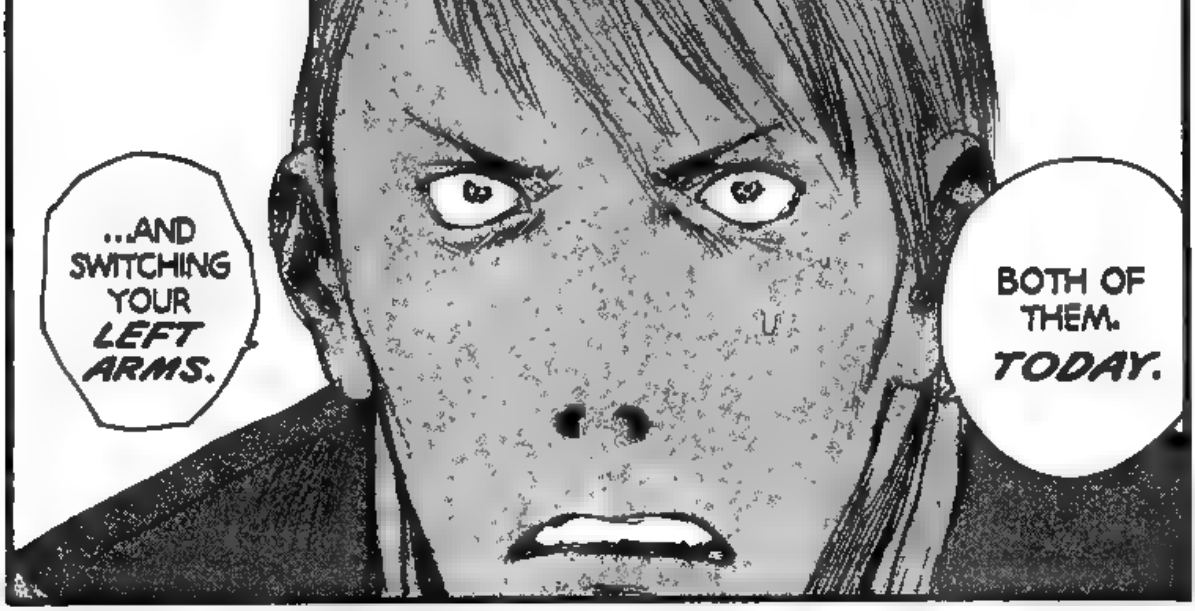
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
YA-YA-YAMADA ASAEMON YOSHIRŌ... DONO?

I'M, UH... AYAME BURANDO, YOUR... CLIENT?
INDEED!
WE'VE BEEN... EXPECTING YOU.
AND SO, AYAME-DONO! WHERE'S TODAY'S HEAD?!
THAT'S, UM, ACTUAL-LY...
WHAT?!
NO HEAD?! JUST LIMBS?!
WELL, YES. THAT'S WHAT I...
NO ONE TOLD YOU?
NO HEAD MEANS...
HRM, SO...
...NO LIVER! COR-RECT?!
GAHD NO!
PARDON?
LIVER?

HRRRRNNN... THAT MEANS SCREAMING, EVEN AFTER THE STROKE. A REPULSIVE PROSPECT.
YET IF HABAKI-DONO HIMSELF ASKS, THEN, NO MATTER HOW UNEXPECTED, WE...
...CAN'T SCREW UP. RIGHT, SENSEI?!
UH-UH. NOPE.
HAH?
SEN-SEI?!
YO! DEWA-NOSUKE!

HOW'S THE OLD ARM?
WIPES MY CRACK, PICKS MY NOSE, WORKS JUST FINE.
WOW, DEWA, YOU WON'T BELIEVE THIS ARM OF YOURS.
HEH HEH, THAT SO?
YES. YES!
YES!
HEY, IT'S YOUR ARM NOW, BOSS.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
YOUR ARM'S COMING BACK TO YOU TODAY.

HEHH?! NO KIDDING?
OF COURSE, MAN!
ALL OF YOU HAS TO BE IMMORTAL, EVERY LAST BIT!
JUST THINK! WHEN I TREAT YOUR WIFE...
...YOU WOULDN'T WANT HER TO HAVE HIS LEGS, RIGHT?!
OH... NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT.
THAT'D BE A TURN-OFF, FOR SURE.
ARE YOU BOTH FEELING STRONG TODAY?
?
MY ALLOTTED TIME IS ALMOST UP.
WE'RE DOING TWO OPS IN A ROW.
RESTORING DEWA-NOSUKE'S RIGHT ARM...


...AND SWITCHING YOUR *LEFT ARMS.*
BOTH OF THEM. *TODAY.*

B-BOTH...?

UH, *SEN-SEI*...? IT'S TIME...

ON THE PERFECTION
OF ANATOMY
Part 2

KAIZO SHIGI
ON THE PERFECTION OF ANATOMY
BY AYAME BURANDO
MY FIRST SURGERY WITH YAMADA ASAEMON YOSHIHIRO-DONO'S AID IS TODAY.
TODAY'S PROCEDURES: FIRST, AMPUTATE THE LEFT ARMS BELOW THE ELBOW, SWITCH, AND SUTURE..."
...HM.
I KNOW I RANTED AT DEWA-NOSUKE THE OTHER DAY, BUT...

...TO SEE MANJI...
...HIS HEAD BOWED AS IF AWAITING EXECUTION, ENTRUSTING HIS BODY TO THE BLADE... IT IS A DISTURBING SIGHT."
WHERE THE FRIG ARE YOU LOOK-ING?

...AFTER THE SWORD'S LIGHTNING FLASH, I INSPECT THE REVEALED NERVES, ULNA, AND RADIUS OF THE IMMORTAL'S LOWER LEFT ARM...

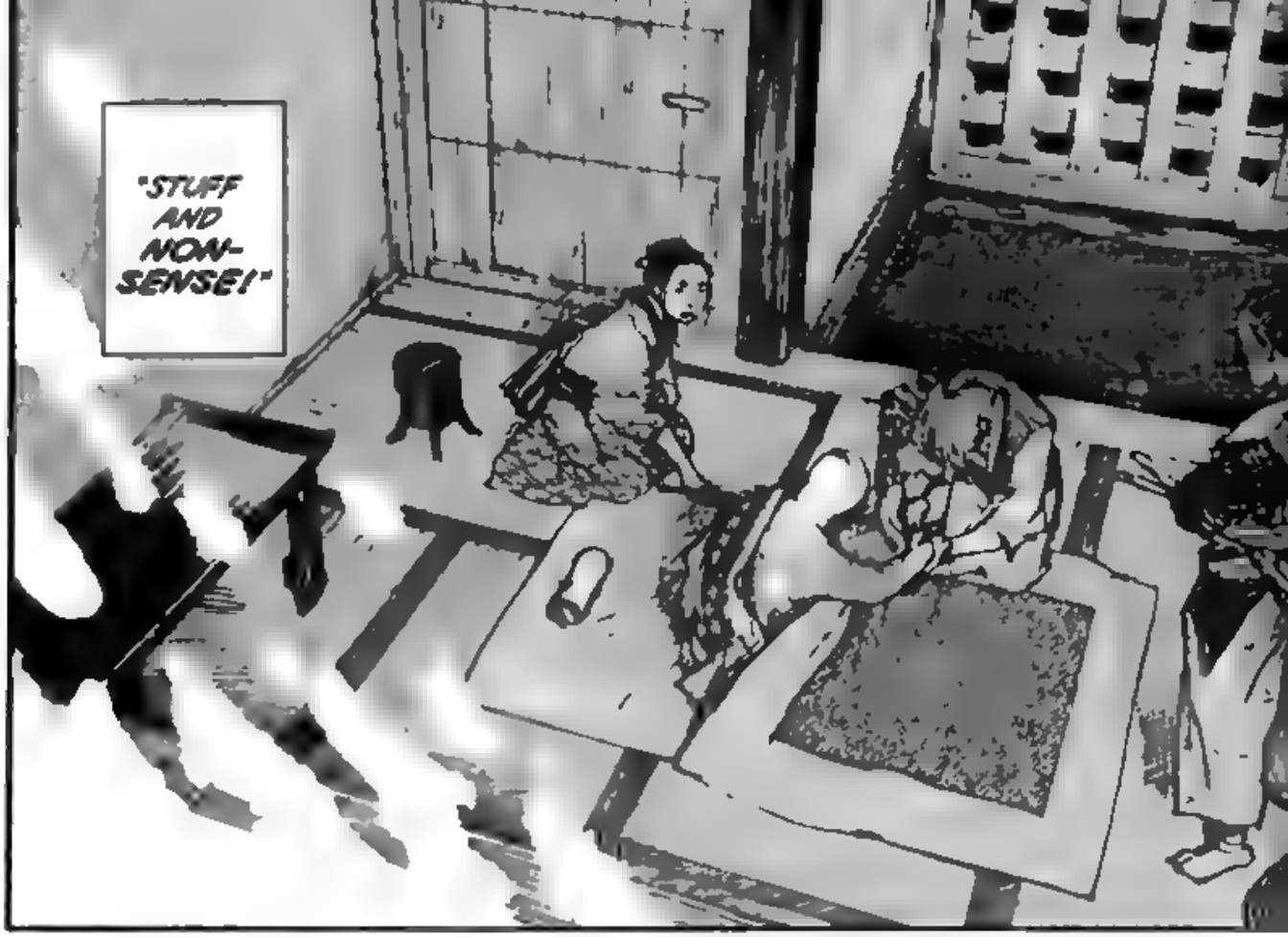
KEEP HIS HEAD UP!
YAMADA-*DONO*... WHAT'S THAT?
RANKINGS. FOR THE TWO SWORDS I USED.
JUST *LIMBS*, YOU KNOW, AND YET...
...IDENTICAL *CUTS*, *PERFECT* BENCH-MARKS.
BY THE WAY...

...CAN'T DO THAT AT AN EXECUTION.
THE FELONS DO SQUIRM SO.
AH...
AND TODAY...
MANJI'S, I EXPECTED... BUT DEWANOSUKE'S?!
...I RESTORED THE RIGHT ARMS WITHOUT COMPLICATION.
I HAD HOPED, YES, YET STILL I WAS AMAZED TO SEE HIS FINGERS MOVE A MERE HOUR AFTER SUTURING!
COULD ONE REJOIN A NORMAL PERSON'S ARM, IT WOULD NEVER FUNCTION AGAIN.
AND YET...YET! BOTH OF THEM DID SO EASILY! THIS STUNNING, TERRIFYING POWER.
TO REVIEW DEWANOSUKE'S BODY...
...HIS LEFT ARM IS MANJI'S.
HIS RIGHT ARM...
...IS HIS OWN, INVESTED WITH MANJI'S IMMORTALITY.

ALL PROCEEDS WITH UNTOWARD EASE, BUT A VITAL QUESTION LINGERS.
WILL DEWA-NOSUKE'S RIGHT ARM LOSE ITS IMMORTALITY OVER TIME ?
THIS, IN TRUTH, IS THE VERY KEY UPON WHICH MY FUTURE STUDIES DEPEND.
AS REGARDS MANJI...
...HE RETURNS TO NORMAL SIMPLY BY PRESSING DEWANOSUKE'S LIMB AGAINST HIS OWN.
NO NEED FOR BAN-DAGES!
....
....
EACH OPERATION LEAVES DEWANOSUKE DRAINED. YET THIS MAN...?
INCREASE HIS FOOD INTAKE, AND YOU CAN SEE HIS VITALITY RETURN.
SUCH PRO-FLIGATE RECOVERY!

HABAKI-DONO TOLD ME
THAT AN 'OLD CROWE' GAVE HIM HIS POWER
HOW I LONG TO MEET HER!
THIS "CURE" IS LIKE NONE KNOWN TO OUR PHYSIC.
IS SHE GOD?
OR THE DEVIL?
I DON'T MIND GET CUTTING UP...?
HEH HEH... YEAH, MAYBE THAT'S TRUE.
LATELY, I GOTTA ADMIT...
...YOU'VE BEEN TRYING STUFF I'D NEVER SEE JUST DUEL-ANS.

AND TO TELL THE TRUTH, I'M JUST A TAD CURIOUS.
LIKE, JUST HOW MONSTROUS IS THIS BOD OF MINE?
BUT DOC-- A WORD TO THE WISE.
BY SOME CRAZY CHANCE YOU DO GIVE SOMEONE A BODY LIKE MINE?
NEXT THING, YOU'LL BE TREATING YOURSELF, DOC. THAT'S WHAT I SAY.
SOMEDAY THEY BRING YOU A GONER, RIGHT?
A HOPE-LESS CASE... AND YOU SAVE HIM BY CHANGING HIS FLESH.
WELL, HELL. SURE HE'LL THANK YOU AT FIRST, BUT YOU WAIT.
A FEW YEARS ON, HE'LL RUN YOU THROUGH!
HE'LL SCREAM, "WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?!" YOU HEAR ME, DOC?! IT'LL HAPPEN, I SWEAR!


"STUFF AND NON-SENSE!"

SKRRD

DEWA-NOSUKE!
D-DOC, DID YA SEE...?

WE FINALLY DID IT! LOOK...
...WHICH ARM IS HEAL-ING?
YOUR ARM... YOUR OWN ARM DID THAT! NOBODY ELSE'S!
.....
.....
OH, MY...
...GOD... THANK GOD.
IT'S ALL I'VE WORRIED ABOUT FOR THREE DAYS...

SENSEI...
...GETTING PAST THIS POINT.
IT'S OKAY NOW. THE IMMORTALITY STAYS... EVERY-THING'S OKAY.
...UNTIL JUST NOW... I'VE BEEN SCARED.
NOT JUST ABOUT MY ARMS, BUT, LIKE, ABOUT YOU FOR-GETTING YOU'RE A DOCTOR.
A BODY THAT DON'T DIE? CAN I REALLY HAVE THAT?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
OF COURSE YOU CAN!
JUST SO LONG AS YOU TRUST ME.
BUT, DOC... I TAKE IT BACK. YOU'RE ONE AMAZING DOCTOR...
...THAT'S FOR SURE.

TAKE THAT, MANJI!
DOCTOR AND PATIENT! WHERE THERE'S TRUST...
...THERE'S NOTHING TO FEAR!
ON THIS DAY, I DISCERN AT LAST MY TRUE PATH AS A DOCTOR. I NEED ONLY DEVOTE MYSELF UTTERLY TO MY CALLING, NOTHING MORE.
—AYAME BURANDO

I DOUBT YOU FORGOT. IT'S YOUR EIGHTH DAY.
BY THE WAY, BURANDO.
....
....
....
.....
.....
.....
...WELL.
GET A NEW MAN NOW? HE'D BE LOST.
SO I ALLOW YOU TO CONTINUE.
THANK YOU, SIR!!

TORAEMON, WE'RE OUT OF COAGULENT.
Y-YES, SIR! RIGHT AWAY!

YOUNG BURANDO.

WHAT YOU DID TODAY...? IS THAT AN... EXPERIMENT?
TO REATTACH LIMBS?

UH, YES, SIR...
I SEE. I SEE.

IF PEOPLE LIKE ME MAKE A LIVING CUTTING PEOPLE APART...
...THEN SOMEONE LIKE YOU APPEARS TO PUT THEM BACK TOGETHER.
EH?
IT'S JUST LIKE... LIFE!!
BUT YOU MUST BE CAREFUL, YOUNG BURANDO.
MAN IS MOST FRAGILE WHEN ALL IS GOING WELL. A SINGLE FAILURE...?
AND SO... REASSEMBLING THE PIECES.
I INSIST ON HELPING YOUR RESEARCH.
I'M, UH... HONORED, SIR. BUT IS THERE...?
MM!
SO I CAN USE IKIDŌ!

MM! IN TAMESHI-GIRI WE LAY BEHEADED CORPSES ON THE STAND.
I CUT UP A BUNCH, YES? TO JUDGE THE CUTTING EDGE.
LIVE... TORSOS?
BUT SWORDS WERE MADE TO CUT THE LIVING...
...IF WE PURSUE REALISM...
AH HAH HAH...
I SEE... CUCKOO CUCKOO
UH... NO ONE SUGGESTED THAT...
I'M NOT A WOLF STARVED FOR BLOOD.
YOUNG BURANDO.

ON THE TENTH DAY, I HOLD THE FOURTH OPERATION.
THREE DAYS LATER...
...DEWA YOSUKE'S BODY REBELS.

O-KEI!
OH, SEN-SEI!
HOW IS HE?!
THE FEVER WON'T GO DOWN!
:hahf:
:hahh:
:ahff:
:ahhh:
APPETITE?
HE JUST THROWS UP. EVEN RICE GRUEL.
THE EARLIER SUR-GERIES?
THREE DAYS' SLEEP AND HE WAS FINE. NOW, IT'S LIKE THIS ALL THE TIME.

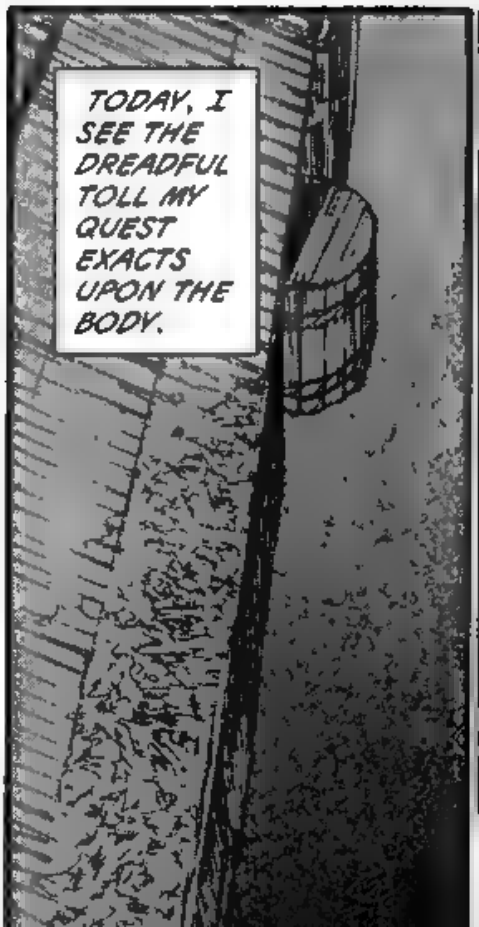
MY SECRET FEAR IS REALIZED!
RIGHT NOW, ALL FOUR LIMBS...
...ARE INFUSED, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, WITH MANJI'S IMMORTALITY.
THEY'RE 'FOREIGN' TO HIS BODY.
SUCH OVERWHELMING POWER...
...HIS FLESH CAN'T STAND IT. IT'S... SCREAMING!"
O-KE!! WAKE UP TORAEMON!
I NEED STIMULANTS! HOT WATER! AND SUGAR!
SENSEI, IF THERE'S SUGAR, I COULD MAKE KUZUYU?
KUZUYU, AT A TIME LIKE--? OH! THAT'S GOOD.

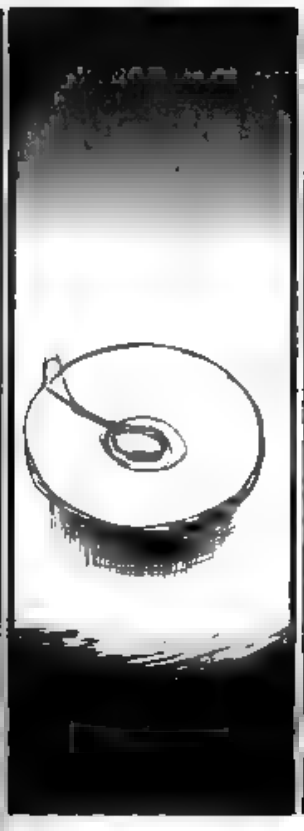
TODAY THE FIRST CLOUDS GATHER OVER AN EXPERIMENT DEWAMSLAE'S FEVER RAGGED BREATHING AND WEAK PULSE PERSIST THROUGH THE MIDNIGHT HOURS
O- MITSU..
O- MITSU..
?
COMIN' HOME NOW
OH, THAT'S HIS WIFE
I'M SO JEAL- OUS

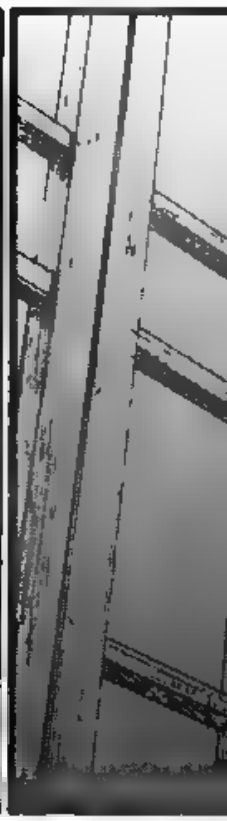
I... WON'T DIE...
WON'T DIE! FOREVER...

OF COURSE YOU WON'T!
YOU THINK I'D LET YOU DIE NOW?!

DAMN! WHAT A MESS!


TODAY, I SEE THE DREADFUL TOLL MY QUEST EXACTS UPON THE BODY.





I HEAR HE WAS IN PERIL?
YES... RATHER.
BUT HE'S RECOVERED.

I RESTORED HIS LEFT ARM THE DAY BEFORE YESTER-DAY.
THAT COMPLETES MY SCHEDULE.
THEN, DEWA-NOSUKE...?
YES.
THEY'RE *BOTH* BACK TO THE BODIES THEY BROUGHT TO YOUR DUNGEON.

YOU LOST WEIGHT, DEWA.
BEEN EATING RIGHT?
.....
.....
.....

THE FINAL POLISH, DEWA-NOSUKE.

DON'T BE A FOOL, BURANDO!
AT LAST.
WE'VE MADE IT THIS FAR.
IT'S BEEN TWENTY-TWO DAYS SINCE MÕZEN-DONO'S OPERATION...
OHH...
HM?
.....
.....

IMMOR-
TALITY.
IT
BOTH IS,
AND
ISN'T...
...ABOUT
HEALING
WOUNDS.
MUST
I BE THE
ONE TO
TEST IT
AGAIN?

ON THE PERFECTION
OF ANATOMY
Part 3

ARE YOU *PREPARED*, DEWANOSUKE?

W-WAIT A MOMENT!
HABAKI-DONO!
...WAIT?
BURANDO, IF I AM TO TRUST WHAT YOU SAY... DEWANOSUKE MUST NOW HAVE THE BODY OF AN "IMMORTAL."
I WANT TO TEST THIS.
WHY HAVE ME WAIT?

...URGNG!
D...
DOC.
IT'S OKAY BY ME.

EVER SINCE THE DAY I CAME HERE...
...AN' SAW MANJI HUNG UP AND GETTING HACKED...
...I FIGURED IF I GOT IMMORTAL, THE SAME WOULD HAPPEN TO ME.
...I AIN'T AFRAID O' NO-THING.
I'M READY FOR IT.
DOC...
...I'M GOOD. I BELIEVE IN YOU.
FACT IS, I... I FEEL LIKE... I GOT A NEW BODY.
IF YOU TELL ME NOT TO WORRY...

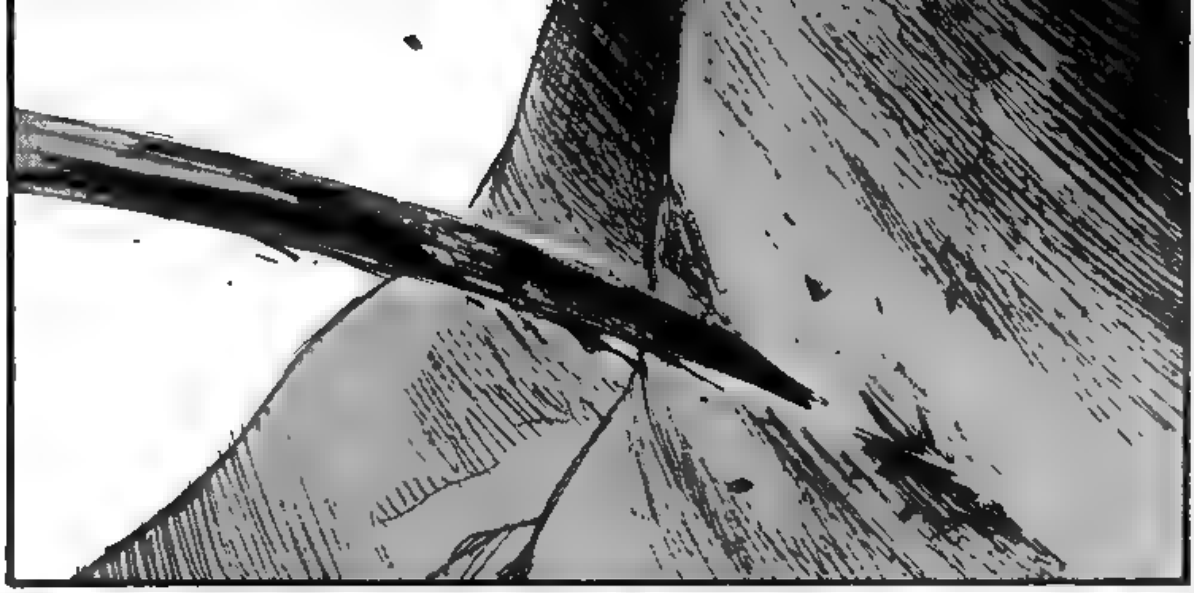
BURAN-DO!
STOP HIM!
DEWA!
YOU THINK YOU GOT A NEW BODY, PAL?!
WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU KNOW?!
YOU CAN HEAL A WOUND WITH-OUT A TRACE... HOW MUCH FUCKING WEIRDER DO YOU WANNA BE?!
WHY CAN'T YOU BE SATISFIED WITH THAT?!

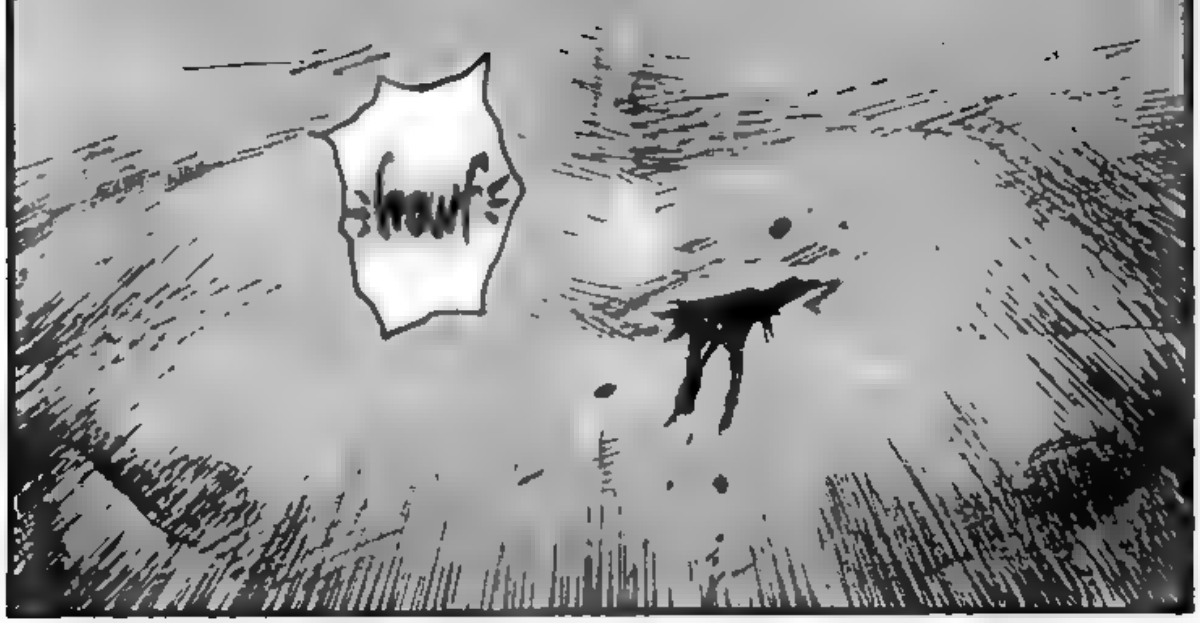
BURAN-DO!
DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DID IT...
...BUT USE THAT BIG BRAIN OF YOURS!
FORGET THIS CRAP.
USE YOUR EYES! DOES THIS GUY LOOK IMMORTAL?!
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S THE SAME MAN YOU BROUGHT HERE. DESICCATED LIKE THIS.
HIS EYES CAN'T EVEN FRIGGIN' FOCUS.

BURANDO.
IF YOUR WORK'S BEEN SO PERFECT...
...WHY DO YOU HESITATE?
DO YOU SAY "WAIT," NOW, BECAUSE YOU LACK CONFI-DENCE?
I, TOO, COULD HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS...
..ABOUT YOUR FUTURE, AS WELL.
WHA...?

SLICK
YAAR GHH!
HA-HABAKI-DONO!
HABAKI... DONO...
...PLEASE PROCEED!
PLEASE...

TURF




:hauf:

SHIFF
SHICK

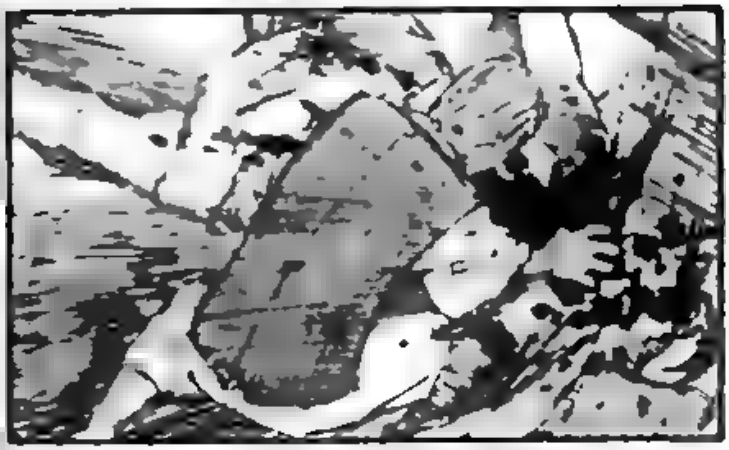
.....
.....

UNG...
URR...

BLOOSH!

HAIEEE
!!

Nooo!
DEWA-
NOSUKE
!!



DEWA-
NOSUKE.
.....
.....
.....

...HE'S DEAD.
.....
.....

BURANDO.
YOU... WILL CONTINUE YOUR MISSION.
I'LL PROCURE THE NEXT FELON SHORTLY.
I'LL OVERLOOK THIS FAILURE.
DON'T FAIL ME THE NEXT TIME.
HRK

YOU GODDAMN BASTARDS!

HMPH...
SO THESE ARE YOUR EXPENSES?

WHY'S THIS PLACE ALWAYS SMELLING LIKE WEEDS?
YOU DON'T SAVOR THE SCENT OF HERBS, DŌA?
NO. I HATE IT.
WHEN I WAS LITTLE, THEY STUCK OTON-PUIKINA UP MY BUTT. REMINDS ME OF THAT.
HO! THAT LAXATIVE, EH? WON'T FIND IT IN THIS SHOP.
YOU ONLY GET THAT GRASS IN EZO.
I WASN'T THERE, BUT I HEAR HE WENT OUT IN STYLE, OUR TOSHŪ...
KOJI, MAKE SURE THIS GETS TO THE TOSHŪ...
ISAKU.

YEAH. YEAH! HE DID! BURNED THE DŌJŌ, EVEN.
I HEAR HIS GRANDFATHER SABURŌ WAS A WILD ONE.
MAYBE IT'S IN HIS BLOOD, EH?
HO HO! STILL A YOUNG'N, THAT ANOTSU KAGEHISA.
AND SO? WHEN DO WE STRIKE?
H-HE SAID IN THE WINTER.
WINTER, EH?
WILL THIS BE READY...
...IN TIME...?

GIVE MY BEST TO ABAYAMA AND THE TOSHŌ.
THEN, WE'LL COME AGAIN.
SEE YA LATER, KASHIN KOJI!
DON'T CALL ME THAT OUT-DOORS!
MY NAME HERE IS MIZUSHINA-SENSEI!
A DOCTOR WITH TWO NAMES... LIVING IN A NAGAYA? SUSPICIOUS. SUSPI-CIOUS!
...OKAY. WHAT-EVER
COWARD-LY KOJI.
ISAKU! SHUT THIS GIRL UP!

♪
DŌA! WHAT'S *THAT*?!
I GOT IT FROM KOJI'S PLACE.
YOU S-*STOLE* IT...?! NOT *AGAIN*?!
?!
LET ME THE FUCK *GO*!!
HOW DO YOU READ THAT? "ZUIKI"?
THESE TWO ARE "HIGO," YOU THINK?
GOSH... I... CAN'T READ THOSE SQUIG-GLES...
Ohh! DAMN!

GOT SLOSHED AND PUT UP MY DUKES, IS ALL!
WHAT DO YOU JITTE-MOCHI GOTTA DO WITH IT?!
YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT, TELL 'EM AT KODENMA-CHŌ.
K-KODEN-MA--?! YOU GOTTA BE JOKING!
BEEN SEEING A LOT OF THAT.
UHH... UH-HUH.
OLD ABAYAMA SAYS IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME THE OKAPPIKI HAVE BEEN FILLING QUOTAS, BUT...
BUT FIVE GUYS FOR A BAR FIGHT? AND ONE OF 'EM A DŌSHIN?
D-DON'T REMEMBER IT LIKE THAT BEFORE...
IF SOMEONE GUESSES WE'RE ITTŌ-RYŪ...
...WE'RE IN FOR IT. OUGHTA DRESS NORMAL, DŌA... HUH?

EH?
D-
DŌA?!
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
YOU CARRY ONE OF THOSE, AND YOU GET PAID...
...TO PICK ON LITTLE PEOPLE.
WHAT?!
NICE TOY.
HUHH?!
GIVE ME ONE, PLEASE.

YOU LITTLE... MIDGET !!
YOU'RE GONNA BE SORRY!

FWAPP!
... HEAVEN HELP Y--?!

I'M NAKIZŌ OF THE SUMIDA!
AND ONCE I'M ON YOU...

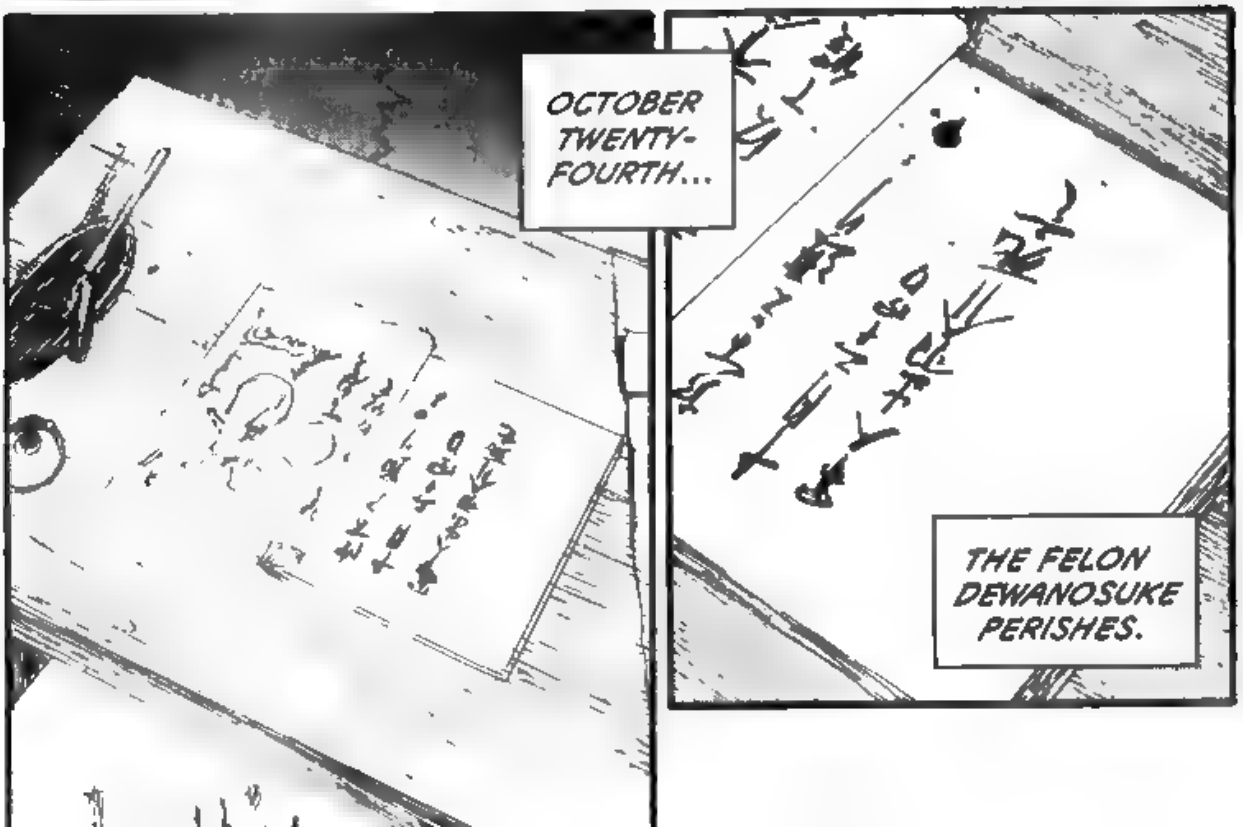
WHAT THE HELL'S THAT?!

SHE-HULK

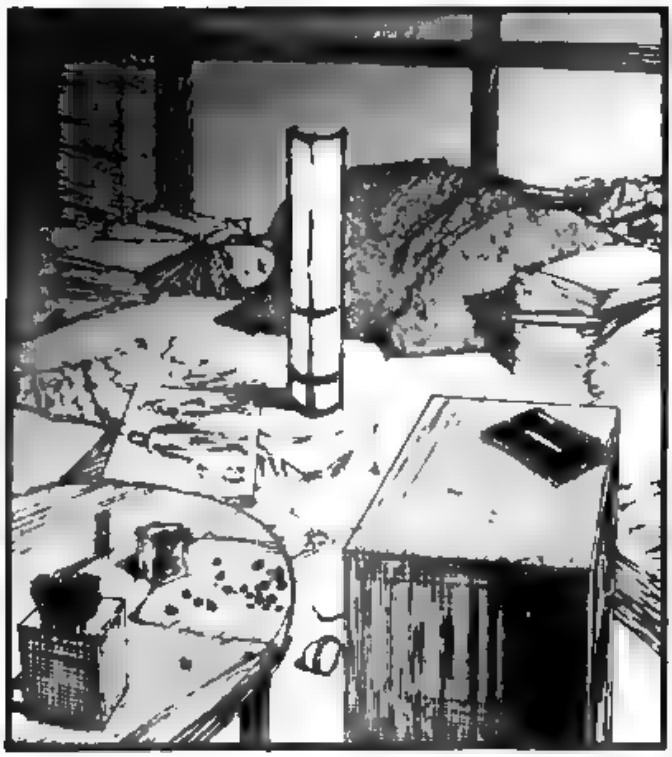
EH HEH HEH HEH HEH...
YOU TOLD ME YOUR NAME.
YOU KNOW, IN MY CREW...
...THAT MEANS YOU'RE NOT AFRAID TO DIE.
I'LL KILL YOU AAH..!
HUPP
.....
.....
.....
.....

UM, S- SO...
...SORRY...
OUCH! OUCH! ISAKU!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
WE... WE'LL BE GOIN'... KEEP UP THE G-GOOD WORK.
YOU CAN HAVE THE ROPE...
.....
.....
DARN YOU!
YOU BIG DUMMY !!
HEAVE HO!
HEAVE HO!

ON THE PERFECTION
OF ANATOMY
Part 4


OCTOBER TWENTY-FOURTH...
THE FELON DEWANOSUKE PERISHES.

...PERISHES.



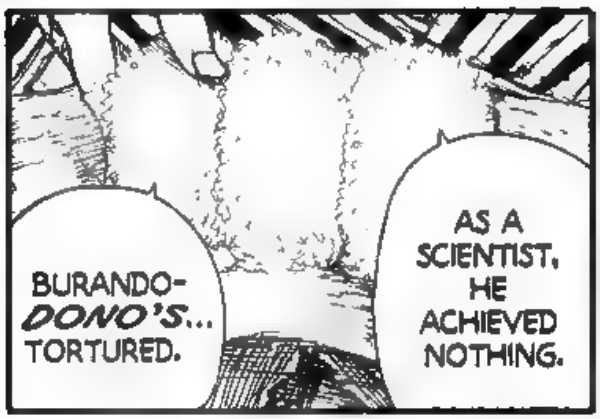
SO BURANDO-*DONO* WON'T LEAVE HIS ROOM?
THAT'S RIGHT.
WELL, CAN'T BLAME HIM.
TWENTY DAYS OF PREP...
...AND THEN *CURTAINS*, JUST LIKE THAT.
YOU'RE... *WRONG*, KARU-KOZAWA-*SAN*.
I SPOKE WITH HIM YESTERDAY, THROUGH THE *FUSAMA*.

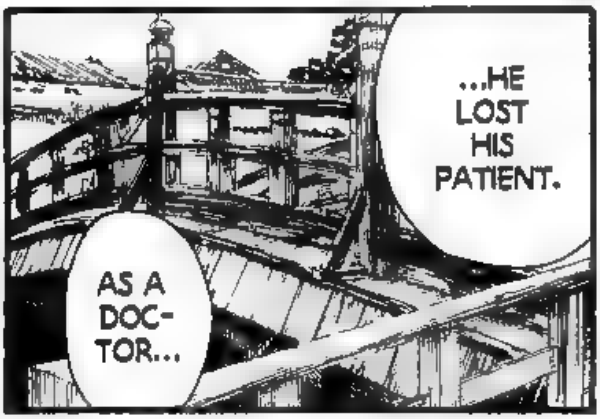
"DO YOU SAY 'WAIT,' NOW, BECAUSE YOU LACK *CONFI-DENCE*?
"I, TOO, COULD HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS...
"...ABOUT YOUR FUTURE, AS WELL."
AT THAT MOMENT, WITH THAT *THREAT*...
...ALL THE IMPATIENCE AND AMBITION HE'D PUSHED ASIDE...CAME RUSHING *BACK*.
HE SAID...
...HE *HATES* HIMSELF NOW...
...FOR CAVING IN TO THEM.
BURANDO-*DONO KNEW*.

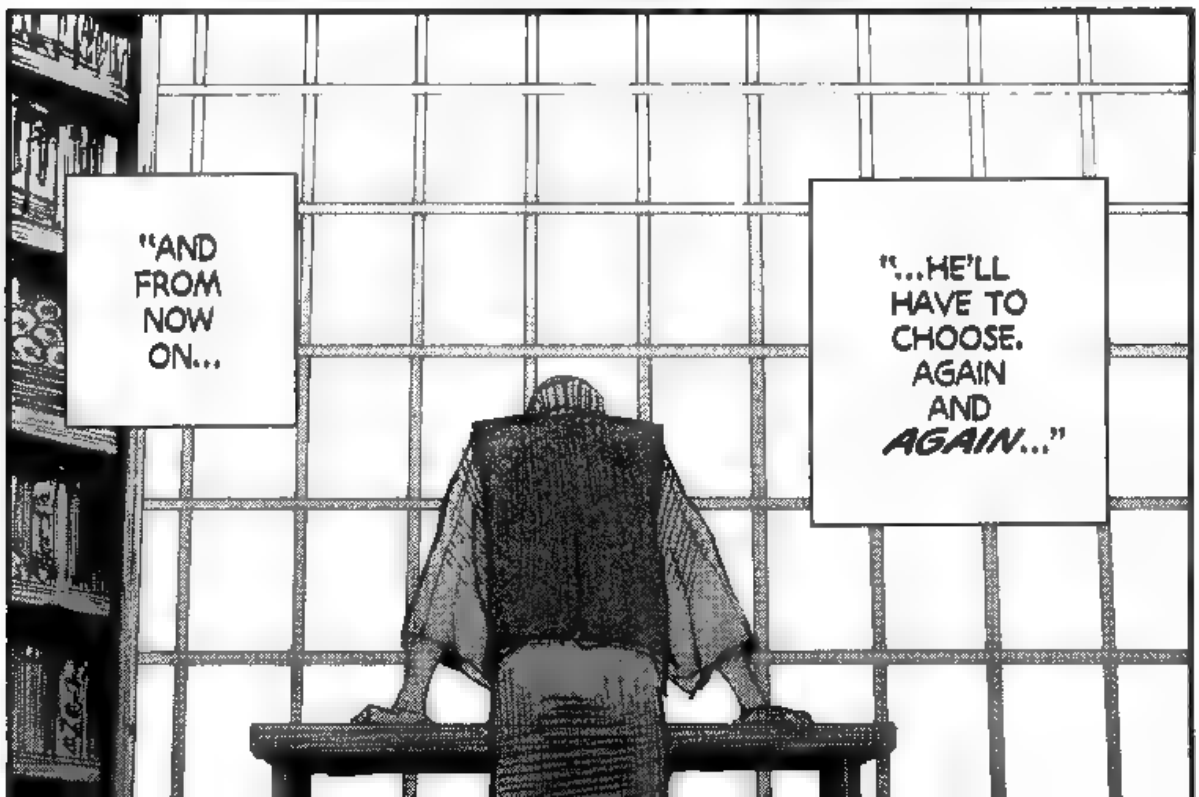
...WASN'T PERFECT. NOT AT ALL.
HE KNEW DEWA'S IMMORTAL-ITY...
"USE YOUR EYES! DOES THIS GUY LOOK IMMORTAL?!"
IN FACT... MANJI WAS RIGHT.
MAYBE A SHALLOW CUT, YES.
BUT TO RECOVER FROM A FATAL THRUST?
EVEN A LAYMAN COULD SEE HE WAS TOO WEAK.
BUT WE, WE--!
HMM.
LOOK, TORA-EMON...

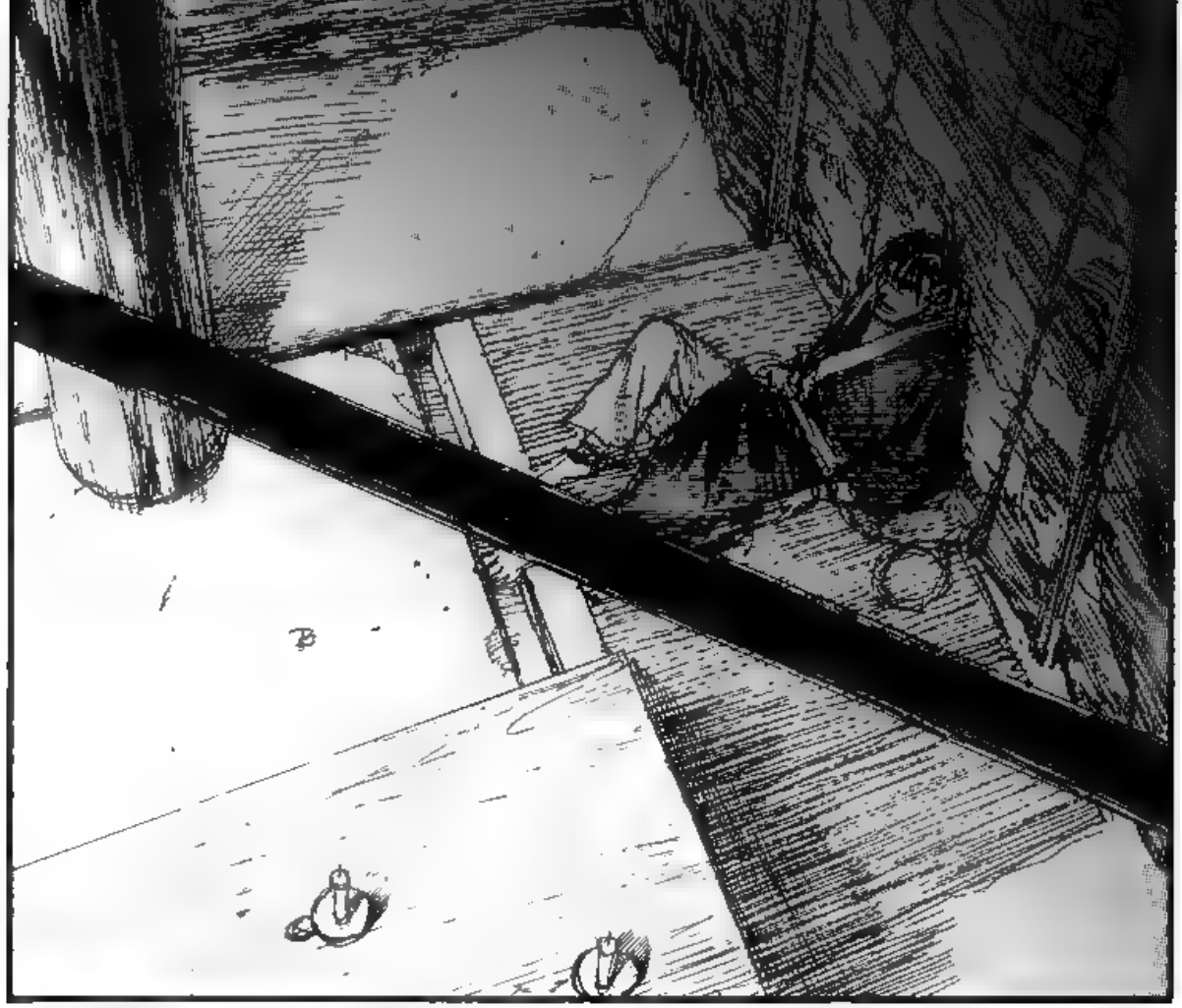
SOONER OR LATER, HE WOULD'VE--
MAYBE SO... ...NO... PROBA-BLY SO.
...TESTS OR NO TESTS, IT WASN'T YOUR PLACE TO DECIDE.
TO HABAKI-DONO, DEWA WAS JUST A STEPPING STONE TO IMMORTAL-ITY.
BURANDO-DONO THOUGHT SO, TOO, AT FIRST.
WE KNEW WE MIGHT KILL HIM...
...AND NOW WE SHOULD BE USING HIS DEATH TO MOVE US EVEN ONE STEP CLOSER TO AN ANSWER.
BUT KARU-KOZAWA-SAN!
YOU CAN START OFF THINKING THAT WAY...
THAT'S EASY TO SAY.

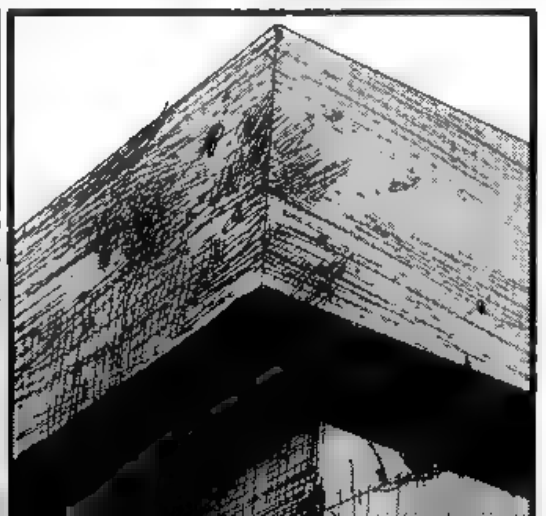
...BUT ONCE YOU'RE INVOLV-ED...
...IT'S DOCTOR AND PATIENT.


BURANDO-DONO'S... TORTURED.
AS A SCIENTIST, HE ACHIEVED NOTHING.


AS A DOC-TOR...
...HE LOST HIS PATIENT.


"AND FROM NOW ON...
"...HE'LL HAVE TO CHOOSE. AGAIN AND AGAIN..."





...HEY!!
GIMME A BREAK!
IT'S BEEN THREE DAYS.
WHERE'S BURANDO?!
IF HE'S THROWN IN THE TOWEL...
...LET ME THE HELL OUTTA HERE!
DON'T KNOW ABOUT BURANDO-DONO...

..BUT HABAIKI-DONO...?
HE'S BRINGING IN A NEW GUY.

SHIFT'S OVER. GIMME THE KEY.
SURE
SO HE'S THE NEXT CORPSE?
THIS ISN'T ABOUT KILLING--
HAH! AIN'T THAT RICH.
FROM THE GUY WHO SKEWERED DEWA.

IF THAT SIGHT OFFENDED YOU, JUST *RECALL*...
...WHERE TO FIND THE CRONE WHO *TRANSFORMED* YOU.
YOU!
DRAG BURANDO DOWN HERE.
YO... PARTNERS IN CRIME?
NAME'S KURIFU. GOOD TO KNOW YOU.

COLD SHOULDER, HUH?
...WHY YOU'RE HERE?
...TELL ME. YOU GOT ANY IDEA...
...RIGHT?
AH! SURE DO! AN EXPERI-MENT...
BUT, HEY! I HEAR YOU DID.
THAT'S CRAZY TALK.
NAW. IT'S NOT.
ARE YOU STUPID?! THAT'S CRAP!
NO ONE TURNS IMMOR-TAL!
TO MAKE ME IMMOR-TAL.

SEE, I HAD A PAL IN THE ITTŌ-RYŪ.
KNEW THE MOMENT I SAW YOU.
I'VE HEARD ALL ABOUT YOU, MAN.
...YOU'RE ONE OF THEM?
NAW, I'M NO GOOD WITH SWORDS.
NOT THAT ONE'D DO ANY GOOD DOWN HERE.
STILL, NEVER THOUGHT I'D MEET THE REAL DEAL.
THE ONLY WIT-NESS...
...SO TO SPEAK...

...THAT THIS ISN'T ALL JUST CRAZY TALK.
YOU WANT FLESH THAT WON'T DIE...?
WHO THE HELL WOULDN'T.
DUMB QUES-TION, MAN.
EVEN RISKING THE LIFE YOU HAVE?
OH-- MY BAD... YOU'RE FROM DEATH ROW, RIGHT?
ME?
HELL, NO. NOT ME!

THEY'D PICKED SOME OTHER DUDE IN OUR CELL.
SO I RAISED MY HAND, MAN.
A CRY-BABY!
"IF YOU'RE GONNA EXPERIMENT ON ME, KILL ME FIRST!"
I MEAN, IMMORTALITY RESEARCH?
WHAT A BLAST, RIGHT?

!
YOU...!
WHAT THE FUCK'RE YOU--?!
STAND DOWN!

YOU'LL FINALLY UNDERSTAND WHEN YOU'RE DEAD.
DUMB FUCKS LIKE YOU.

OCTOBER TWENTY-FIFTH ON THE LUNAR CALENDAR, IN A DUNGEON SOMEWHERE IN EDO...
...SURGERY RESUMES.

IS HE OFF IN THE HEAD...?
IT'S NOT GOOD TO LAMENT A FELON'S DEATH FOR LONG...
GRIEF. HESITATION. IF WE DOCTORS LET SUCH FEELINGS BIND OUR HANDS...
...THEN, DOWN HERE AT LEAST... THEIR DEATHS WILL BE IN VAIN.

A STRANGE CASE...HE DOESN'T FACE THE DEATH PENALTY, YET HE VOLUNTEERS AS A GUINEA PIG.
THE SECOND FELON IS KURIFU.
STILL, BECAUSE OF THAT, HE COOPERATES FULLY. A TRUE HELP.
OUR GREATEST HURDLE-- AMPUTATION AND RE-SUTURING WITHOUT ANESTHETIC-- HE APPEARS TO TAKE IT IN STRIDE.
FELICITOUS. IF KURIFU AND MANJI COOPERATE, I NEED ONLY RETRACE MY STEPS.
I SEE NO PROBLEMS... BUT ONE.

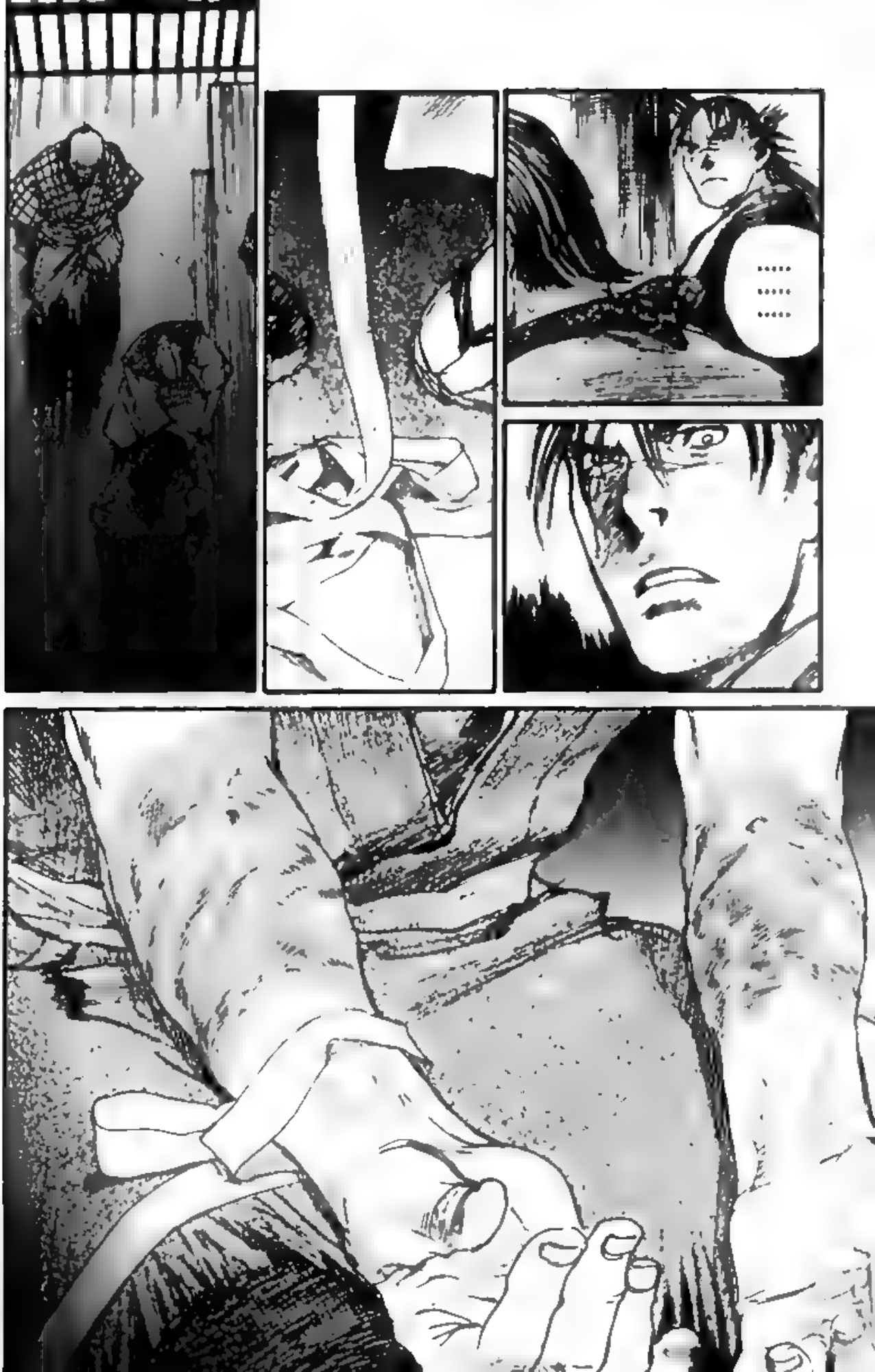
BOTH ARMS AT ONCE!
WITHIN THE HOUR, I REMOVE, SWITCH, AND REATTACH MANJI AND KURIFU'S LIMBS.
THERE IS METHOD IN THIS MADNESS.
MY LESSONS FROM DEWA-NOSUKE.
ONE. THIS PROCE-DURE...
...TAKES TOO MANY DAYS.

AND TWO, THE MORE DAYS PASS, THE MORE THE FELON DECLINES.
CONSEQUENTLY, I MUST BUY TIME, NO MATTER HOW EXTREME, ON THIS FIRST DAY WHEN HIS HEALTH IS PERFECT--OR HE WON'T LAST TO THE END.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOUR BODY...?
...THE DOC WHO WEIGHS LIVES AGAINST HIS CAREER.
ISN'T HE THE CARING ONE...
HEH HEH HEH...

RETURN TO THE BASICS!
TO THOSE DARK DAYS WHEN I COULDN'T EVEN SAVE MY OWN MOTHER... IF I ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT MORTIFICATION, THEN... SOMEDAY!
FOUR DAYS LATER...

TRY MOVING YOUR FINGERS.
RIGHT... YEAH.
.....
.....
IT SHOULD BE EASY TO GET HIM AS FAR AS DEWA-NOSUKE.
IT'S WHAT COMES NEXT...
GOD, THAT TER-RIBLE DAY.
I PANICK-ED. I CAN'T DENY IT.
THIS TIME, NO MATTER WHAT HABAKI-DONO SAYS, I'LL TAKE TIME... ESPECIALLY...
?

SURELY THEY'LL MOVE MORE THAN THAT?
WHAT'S WRONG?
HRRK... NO...
DOC... I...
...I DON'T WANNA SAY IT...
...BUT THE SUR-GERY...?
YOU SURE YOU DIDN'T...
...SCREW IT UP?
WHAT?!
NOTHIN' ...DOC. THESE LAST TWO DAYS.
DON'T FEEL NOTHIN'...!



WHA--?!
WHAT THE--?! FUCK!
Nooo... !!
AK
GOU OHHH!
MY-- MY ARMS!!
YOU IDIOT! SIT STILL!!
GHAA
DON'T--!

ON THE PERFECTION
OF ANATOMY
Part 5

KURIFU'S
DEAD?!

Y-YES, SIR.
JUST NOW--

TELL ME EVERY-THING!

WHAT... IS THIS...?
WHY'D IT HAPPEN?
CAN I SWING YET?
DEWA-NOSUKE WAS... FINE.
HE WAS JUST FINE! RIGHT?!

.....
.....
.....
...IF... IF YOU DON'T FIX MANJI'S ARM...
BURANDO-DONO...
...EVERY-THING'LL BE RUINED.
HRKK!

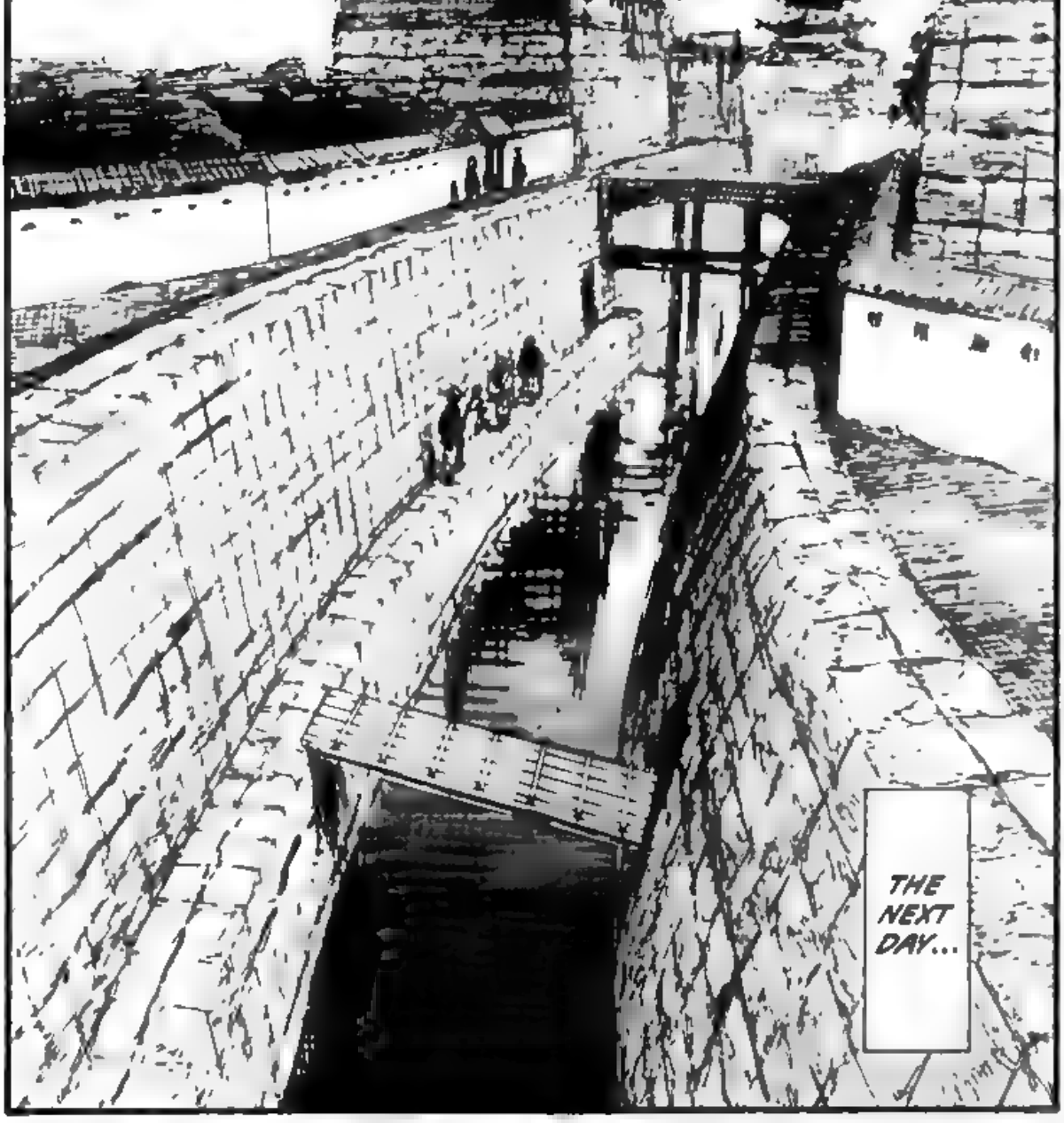
OUR EXAM FOUND...
...HIS CIRCULATION *BLOCKED* AT HIS ELBOWS. *HORREN-DOUS* GANGRENE.
ONLY...
... *EVERY-THING* WAS DONE THE SAME WAY AS BEFORE, SO... WE DON'T HAVE A CLUE.
MANJI'S ARM?
OH... HIM.
HE'S FINE, PERFECT-LY FINE.

AND BURANDO'S STILL DOWN THERE?

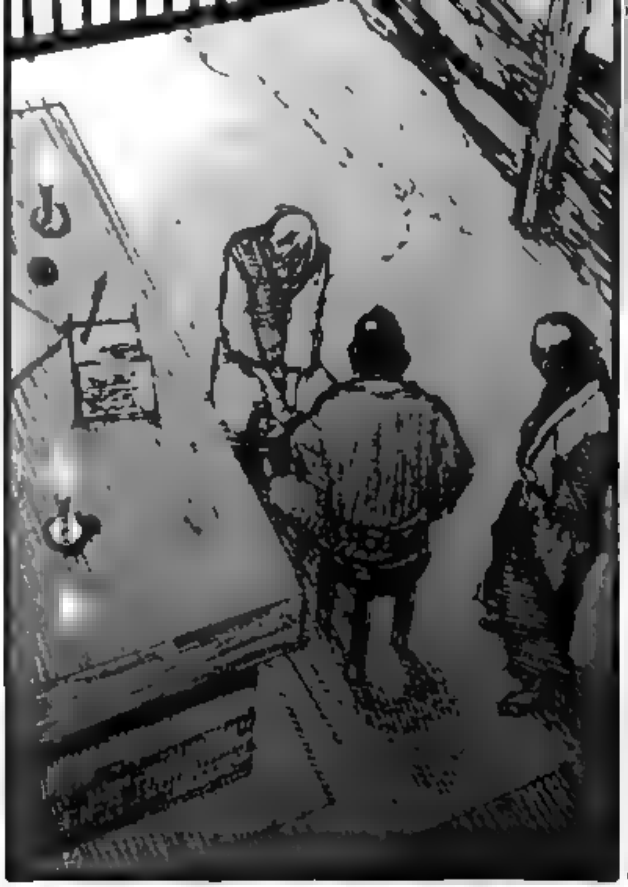
THE *CAUSE*, BURANDO?
SIR... SIR, THAT'S--!

IT'S... A MYSTERY...
.....
.....
.....
NO!
I... I HAVE SOME IDEAS!
FOR INSTANCE... IF KURIFU HARBORED SOME DISEASE!
IF IT HADN'T MANIFEST-ED...AND MANJI'S FLESH TRIGGERED IT...?
SOME-THING... LIKE THAT. BUT... BUT IN TRUTH...
...I'M SHAMED TO SAY I DIDN'T EXPECT FAILURE.
I WASN'T READY FOR BOTH ARMS...
...TO ROT.

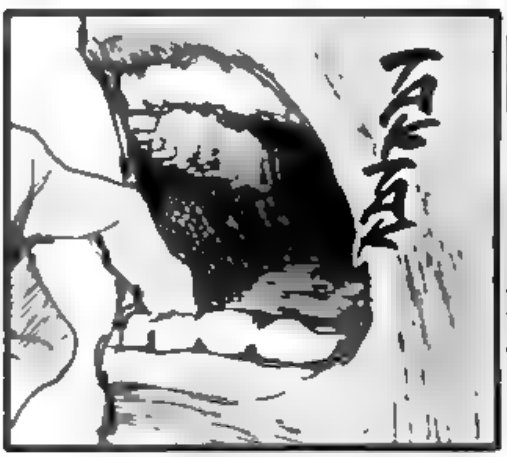
I LET HIM BLEED OUT!
THEN I LET HIM DIE!
HMM. BUT IF THAT'S SO...
...EVEN IF YOU SAVED THE MAN...
...HE WAS STILL AN INAP-PROPRIATE SUBJECT.
HRMM...


THE NEXT DAY...

THE THIRD FELON, KŌNO-KURA.



THE LAST TIME YOU WERE SICK?
CAN'T SAY. TEN YEARS AGO...?

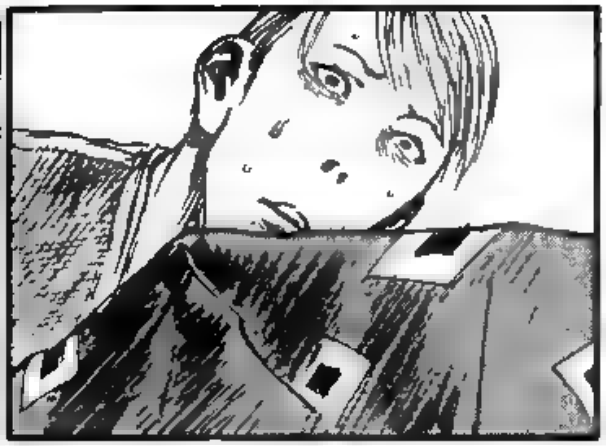

ゴクッ

IS THAT SO...?

SEN-SEI!
GACK!
GACK!
IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE!

BURAN-
DO
?!
YOU
KILLED
ANOTHER
ONE
??
HRRRNG...

FIRST DAY OF THE ELEVENTH MONTH. I OPERATE ON THE FOURTH FELON, KUNI-MATSU.
THE THIRD DAY. HE EXPIRES. MASSIVE HEART FAILURE.
THE FOURTH DAY. PATIENT NUMBER FIVE, KORE-WASAI.
THE SEVEN-TH DAY...
...DEAD.
THE ELEVENTH...



...WHY...?
WHY...?

WHY ARE YOU DYING?
WHYYY ?!
GHAARRGH! ALL OF YOU!!
STOP DYINNGGG !!
OOHHHH
I'M CALLED THE DEATH GOD, BUT MY, MY...
...THIS LAD HAS THE TOUCH.

THE CURSE OF DEWA-NOSUKE, GENERAL?
...RUBBISH...
BURAN-DO...

...IT'S TIME YOU REST THOSE BONES.

MUTENICHI-RYŪ DŌJŌ

.....
.....
.....

BOOK TITLE:
HANASAKA JII

A WHOLE MONTH NOW.
YOU'RE HANG-ING IN THERE, RIN.
YOU, TOO, HYAKURIN... EVEN WITH YOUR INJURY.
HEY, IT'S JUST MY ARM, RIGHT?
BUT WE'VE LOOKED JUST ABOUT EVERY-WHERE.
IF WE COME UP DRY AT *SHAKUJII* TODAY, WE'RE SCREWED.

ANOTHER MAN...?
WELL, IF THAT'S IT...
...WE'RE OUT OF LUCK...
OUT OF LUCK?!
TWO PEOPLE, SEARCHING FOR EACH OTHER?
THEY'LL FIND EACH OTHER, AS LONG AS THEY STILL LIVE!
YOU'RE BROKE, RIGHT?
JUST... GIVE IT UP, ALREADY.
IF HE'S IN ANOTHER MAN, I'LL GO TO ANOTHER MAN!
I HARDLY EXPECT...
...YOU TO GO WITH ME.

AUUGG!
OUOHH!
HEEEK!
YOU LITTLE IDIOT!!
AREN'T YOU OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW...
...WHAT'S POSSIBLE AND WHAT'S NOT?!
.....
.....
.....
JUST WHAT IS MANJI TO YOU, HUH?
YOUR HUSBAND? YOUR LOVER BOY? YOUR BROTHER?!
HNF!
ALL HOT, LIKE SOME FARM GIRL IN LOVE.

BUT--!
THE ITTO-RYŪ'S ON THE SKIDS.
WHAT'S LEFT FOR YOU AND MANJI TO TEAM UP FOR?
NO ONE KNOWS WHERE ANOTSU'S GONE.
HE'S A HIRED BODY-GUARD!
IS THAT THE KIND OF GUY YOU SACRIFICE YOUR LIFE FOR?!
RUMOR HAS IT HE'S DEAD.
NOT ONE DAMN THING.

MAYBE THE BIG GUY FIGURED THAT OUT FIRST.
MAYBE HE TOOK THE CHANCE TO SLIP OUT OF YOUR LIFE.
...JUST JOKING. HE'D NEVER DO THAT, RIGHT? AH HAH HAH!
ME AND MY BIG MOUTH...
.....
.....
.....
OH, WELL.
IF YOU *INSIST* ON GOING...

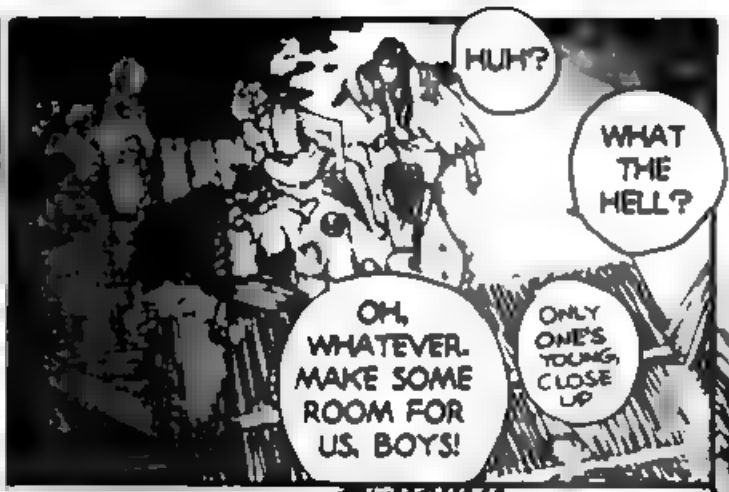
...WHY THE HELL *NOT!*
WE CAN BEG *TOGETHER*, IN FRONT OF YOUR *PAINTER SENSEI.*

NOPE. NEVER SEEN 'EM... NOT A ONE.
WHAT'RE THOSE BLACK THINGS?
GLASSES. BLACK GLASSES.
I'LL BE DAMNED. AT NIGHT. TOO?
YUP.
UHMM...
EVEN IF THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE THIS, HAS ANYONE MOVED HERE RECENTLY?
CAN'T SAY... DON'T LIVE HERE, ACTUALLY.
WHERE?
THERE'S A BUNCH OF BEGGARS, THOUGH, CAMPING OUT.
THE RIVER-BANK. OVER THERE.

IT STINKS.

...HWUH?
EXCUSE ME? WE'RE LOOKING FOR--
HYAKURIN. THERE'S A FIRE.
OH... SORRY 'BOUT THE EYES.
NOW *THAT'S* A TIME SAVER. POUR THEM A DRINK OR TWO, AND WE MIGHT GET SOME LEADS.
MONEY FOR *SAKE?*
UH, YES. JUST A LITTLE...

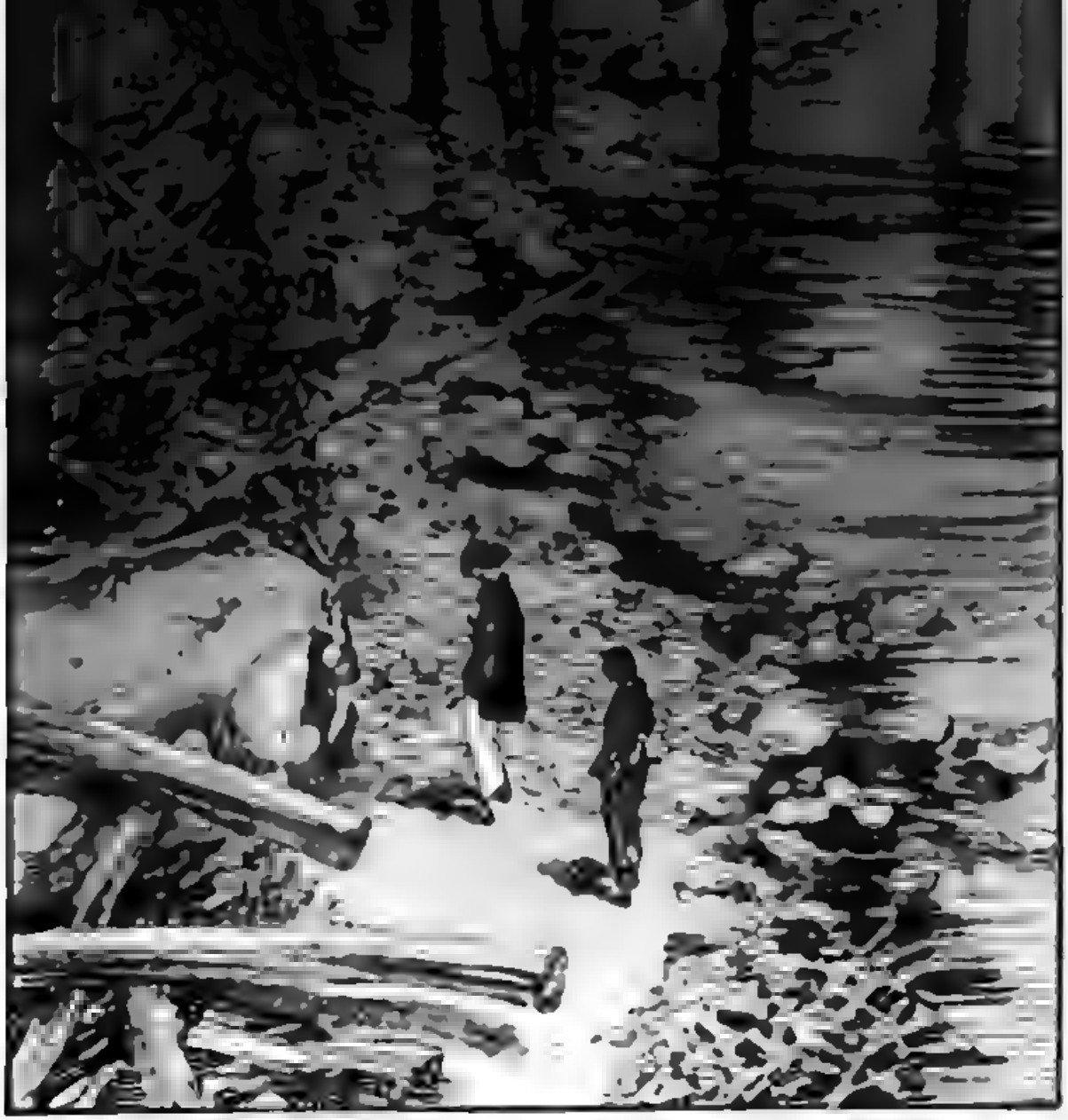
HUH?
THEY ALREADY HAVE SOME.
WOMEN...
YOUNG 'UNS!

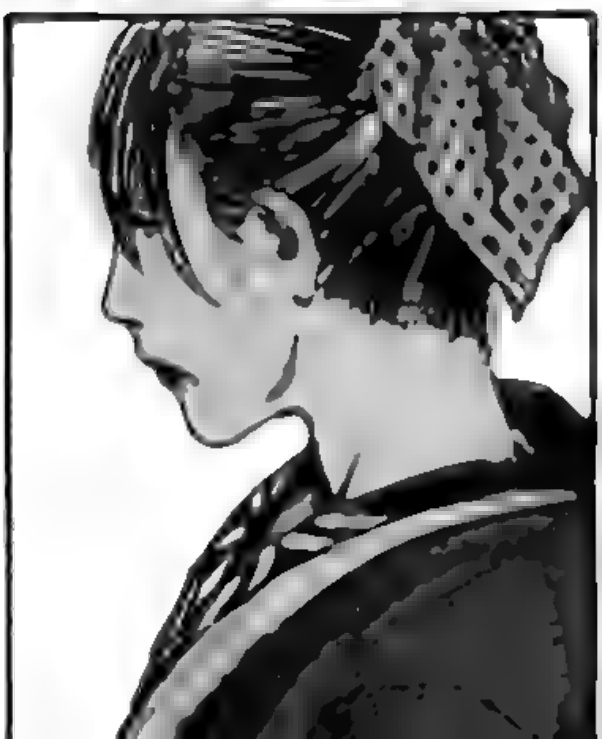

HUH?
WHAT THE HELL?
OH, WHATEVER. MAKE SOME ROOM FOR US, BOYS!
ONLY ONE'S YOUNG, CLOSE UP

KIND SIRS. SORRY. I KNOW IT'S DARK, BUT...

GIICHI ?

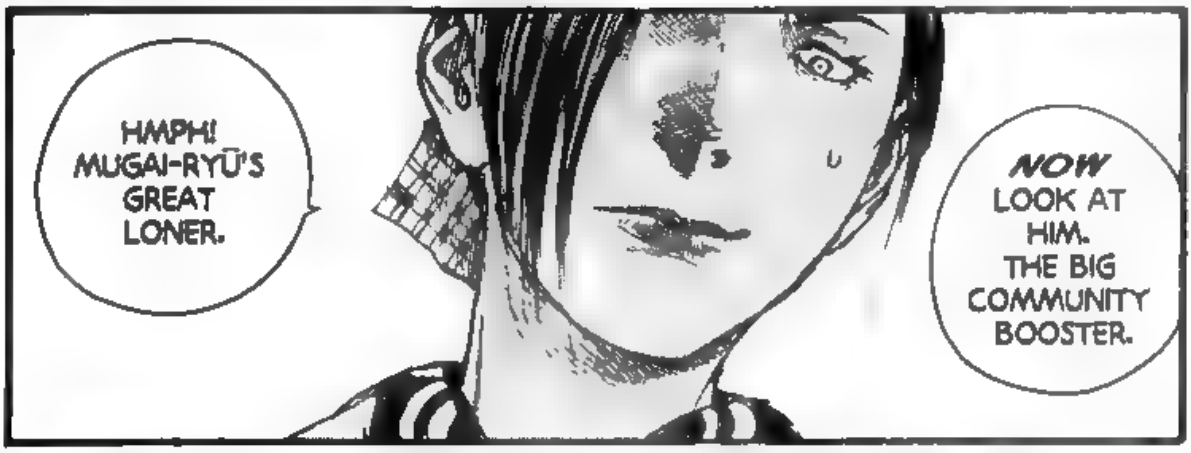
ON THE PERFECTION
OF ANATOMY
Part 6





SO. WHAT'S THE STORY?

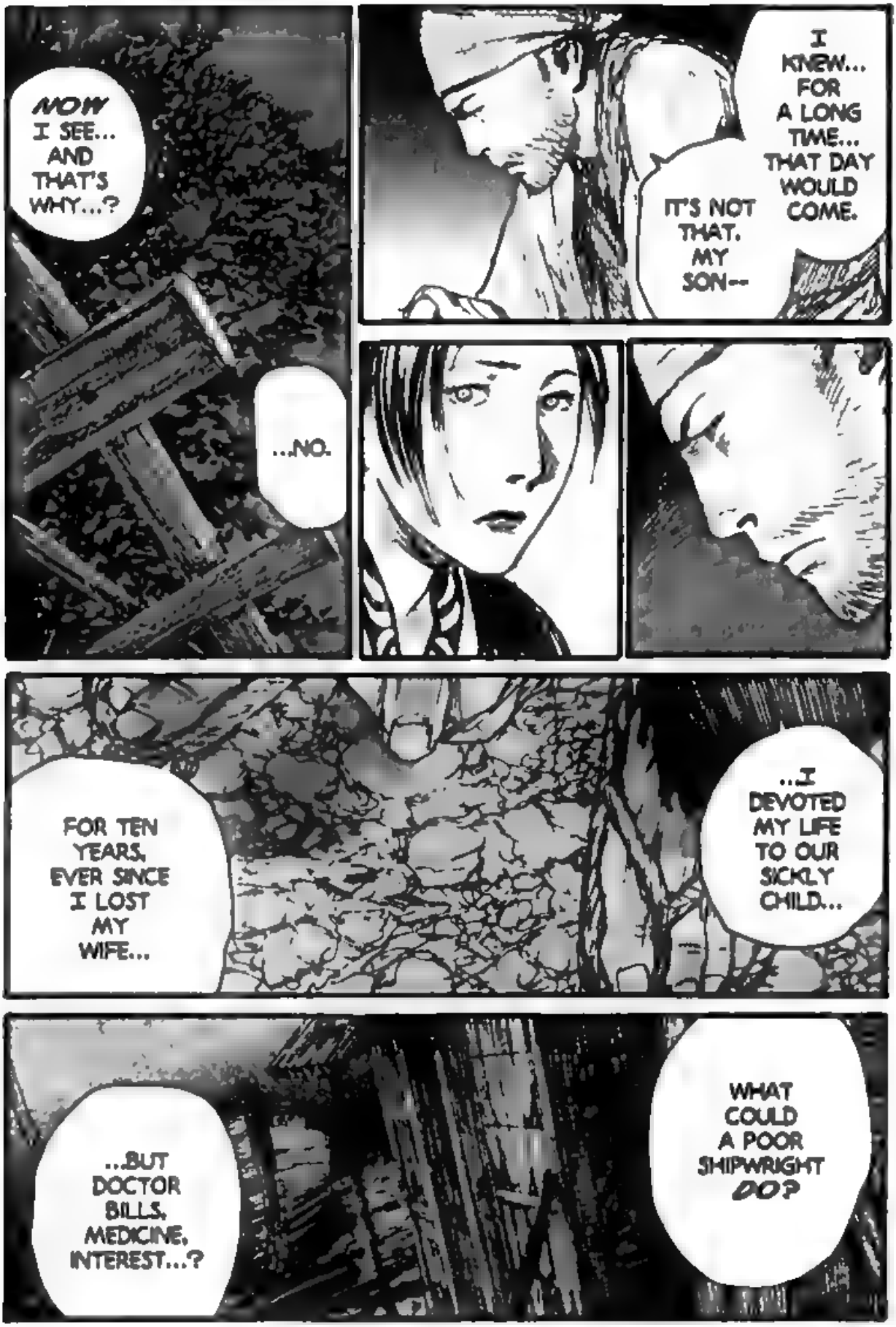
YOU TOOK ALL THAT CASH YOU GOT WHEN YOU LEFT THE MUGAI-RYŪ AND BLEW IT ON FOOD AND SAKE?
GAVE IT TO THESE BEGGARS SO THEY'D PUT YOU UP?


HMPH! MUGAI-RYŪ'S GREAT LONER.
NOW LOOK AT HIM. THE BIG COMMUNITY BOOSTER.

I STOP BY HABAKI'S PLACE FOR A CHANGE, AND WHAT?
YOU'VE VANISHED. I'VE BEEN "RETIRED."

YOU KNEW THAT, RIGHT?!
I'VE GOT A MOUNTAIN OF QUESTIONS! BUT FIRST--
AND NOT JUST THAT! THE WHOLE OUTFIT'S GONE.
--MANJI! HE'S BEEN MISSING SINCE HE WENT OFF WITH YOU!
SO WHAT'S THAT ABOUT?! WHAT'D THE BOSS TELL YOU TO DO?
STOP IT...!
MY HEAD... THROB-BING...
RIN, HONEY?
POUR THIS ALL OUT, AND GET ME SOME WATER.
EH? UHM... OKAY.
BASTARD. I'LL WAKE YOU UP.

JUST LOOK AT YOU, GIICHI.
A FINE MAN LIKE YOU.
WHEN DID YOU COME HERE?
WHAT ABOUT LITTLE TŌ--
TŌ- JIRŌ'S... DEAD...
.....
.....
.....


NOW I SEE... AND THAT'S WHY...?
...NO.
I KNEW... FOR A LONG TIME... THAT DAY WOULD COME.
IT'S NOT THAT. MY SON--
FOR TEN YEARS, EVER SINCE I LOST MY WIFE...
..I DEVOTED MY LIFE TO OUR SICKLY CHILD...
...BUT DOCTOR BILLS, MEDICINE, INTEREST...?
WHAT COULD A POOR SHIPWRIGHT DO?

"ON MY SECOND HEIST, ON A FISHERMAN'S STOREHOUSE...
"...I SLIPPED UP.
"I WAS ON DEATH ROW, AWAITING MY TURN...
"...WHEN HE SHOWED UP.
"YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO WHAT HE SAID...
AND I TOLD HIM...
"...GET MY SON A DOCTOR. IF YOU WON'T, THEN KILL US BOTH.'"

I HUNTED.
RELENT-LESSLY.
JOY-FULLY.
HABAKI KEPT HIS PROMISE.
...A HUNT-ER.
AND I BECAME...
IN THE END, WHEN BOTH MY PREY AND MY SON WERE GONE...
...ALL I HAD LEFT WAS A PILE OF GOLD...
...MY HONEST TO GOD... LIBER-TY.
...AND, AFTER TEN YEARS...
BUT... I CAN'T RECALL...

...WAY BACK THEN... HOW DID I EVER LIVE?
TRY AND TRY, I CAN'T... REMEMBER.
LIVING.
WHAT'S IT MEAN... TO LIVE?

LISTEN, HYAKU...
...THE MUGAI-RYU'S GONE...
...AND, NO MATTER WHY, THAT'S STILL...
...A BLESSING FOR YOU.
DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME, HYAKU...
...ON FRIENDS FROM THE BAD OLD DAYS.
HYAKU-RIN... HERE.

ARE WE ALL SOBERED UP?

YOUR KID'S DEAD? OH, DEAR!
I LOST TWO OF 'EM, SMARTASS!
I STILL WONDER WHAT I'M DOING WALKING AROUND ALIVE.
SO REMEMBER THIS!!
IT WAS YOU WHO KEPT ME HERE! YOU!
IF YOU AND HABAKI HADN'T SHOWN UP...
..I COULD HAVE JOINED MY HUSBAND AND MY CHILDREN!!

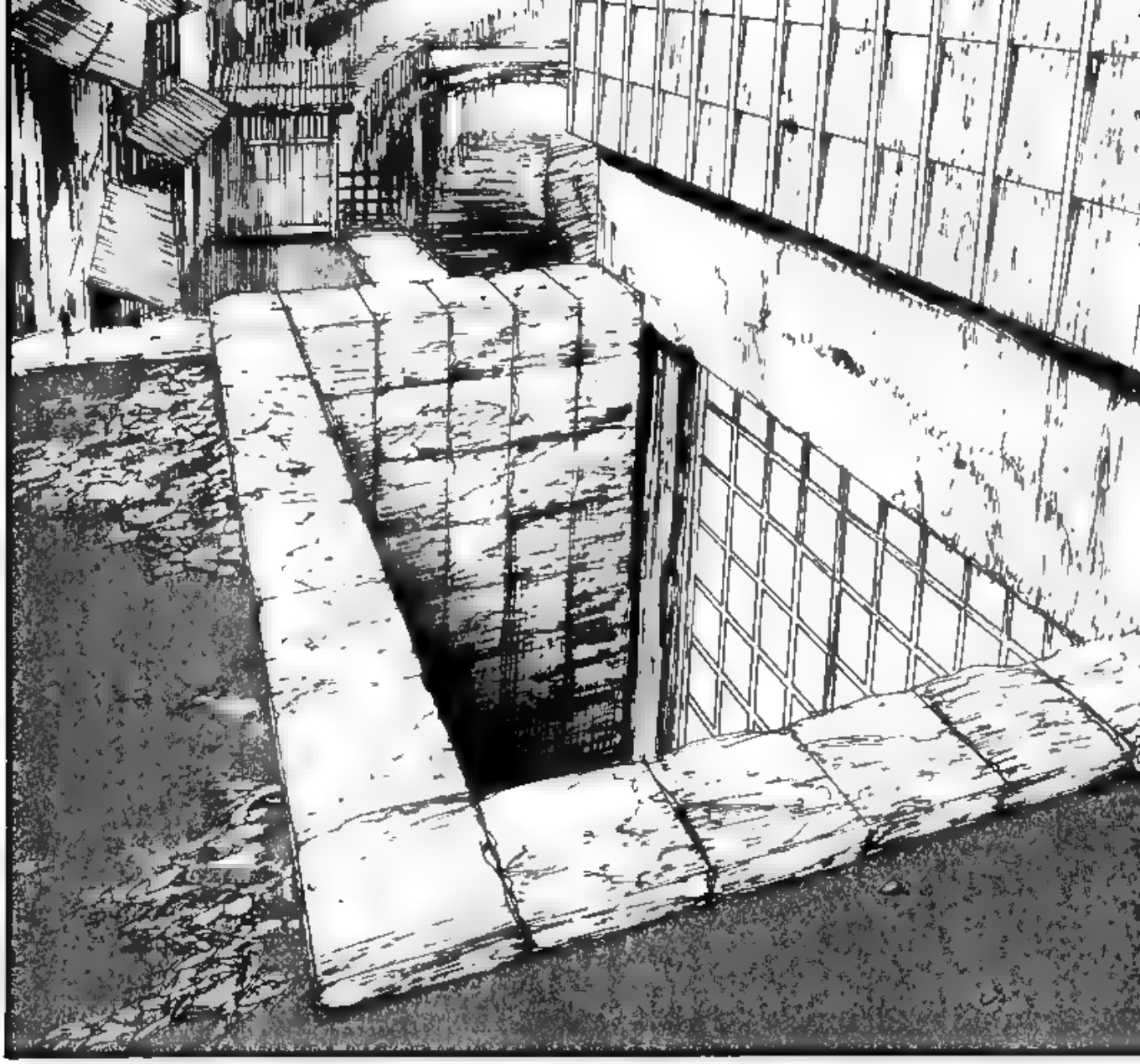
THINK I'LL *LET YOU*, YOU DAMN *BALDIE*?!
YOU PLAY *GOD* WITH SOMEONE WHO NEVER ASKED FOR IT AND THEN TRY TO SLINK OFF ON YOUR *OWN*?!

GI-ICHI...

...YOU HELPED ME GET TO *KAGA*.
I HAVEN'T FORGOT-TEN.

I *HAVEN'T* FORGOTTEN.
BUT...

...IGNORE WHAT'S HAPPENED NOW BECAUSE OF YOU...
...AND I MAY JUST HAVE TO HATE YOU...
IF YOU WANT TO VANISH, VANISH WITH-OUT EARNING MORE HATE.
...OUCH...



YOU HAVE NO NEW PLANS?

BURAN-
DO...
.....
.....
.....

I LOBBIED THE GO-RŌJŪ TO COLLECT THEM.
ALL THESE MEDICAL TOMES. ANATOMIES, TEXTS FROM JAPAN AND ABROAD.
FOR-BIDDEN DRUGS. ILLEGAL SPECIMENS.

IT SEEMS...
IT WAS JUST TO SATISFY...
...YOUR CURIOUS-ITY.
NO... NO! I NEVER INTENDED...!
BUT...
BURANDO. IF I LET YOU GO... IT'S NOT BECAUSE OF FAILED SURGERIES.

...IT'S BECAUSE OF YOUR FEEBLE HEART!
THE WAY YOU FRET AND PANIC WHEN A CRIMINAL DIES!
DO YOU RECALL WHAT YOU TOLD ME?
"DON'T YOU REMEMBER...?"
YES, IT'S ACHIEVABLE. BUT IT WON'T BE AN EASY ROAD.
SUCCESS WILL BE BUILT ON RADICAL MEASURES... AND EXTREME SACRI-FICE.
THERE MAY BE DEATHS... DOZENS OF DEATHS.

DEWA-NOSUKE ALONE WON'T DO.
I REQUEST TO HAVE ISHIDE TATEWAKI-*DONO* SEND US *ALL* THE DEATHROW INMATES UNDER HIS WATCH.
AND IF THAT'S *STILL* NOT ENOUGH...
...*OTHER* FELONS AS WELL.
"YOUR EYES WERE THE EYES OF A MAN ON A *QUEST*.
"NO ROOM FOR *SENTIMEN-TALITY*. *GLEAMING* WITH THE *CRUEL CONVICTION* OF A TRUE SCIENTIST!"
THINKING BACK, YOUR EYES WERE *ALWAYS* THAT WAY...
...EVEN WHEN THE "KILLER OF A HUNDRED" ROILED THE STREETS...
...AND RUMORS FLEW THAT HE WAS *IM-MORTAL*.

"I *ALONE* PURSUED THOSE TALES THAT EVERYONE *MOCKED*. UNTIL, ONE DAY...

"...THEY DRAGGED BEFORE ME A YOUNG DOCTOR, WHO CLAIMED HE'D COME FROM *TAISEI*.

TAISEI: *EUROPE*.

"YOU LOOKED LIKE YOU'D COME FROM THE *GRAVE*, *EMACIATED*, YOUR HAIR *WILD*.

"BUT THOSE PIERCING *EYES...!* YOU WERE LIKE A BREATH OF FRESH AIR TO ME THEN.

"I THOUGHT, IF IMMORTALITY *EXISTS*, AND IF ANYONE IN THE LAND CAN *DECODE* IT...

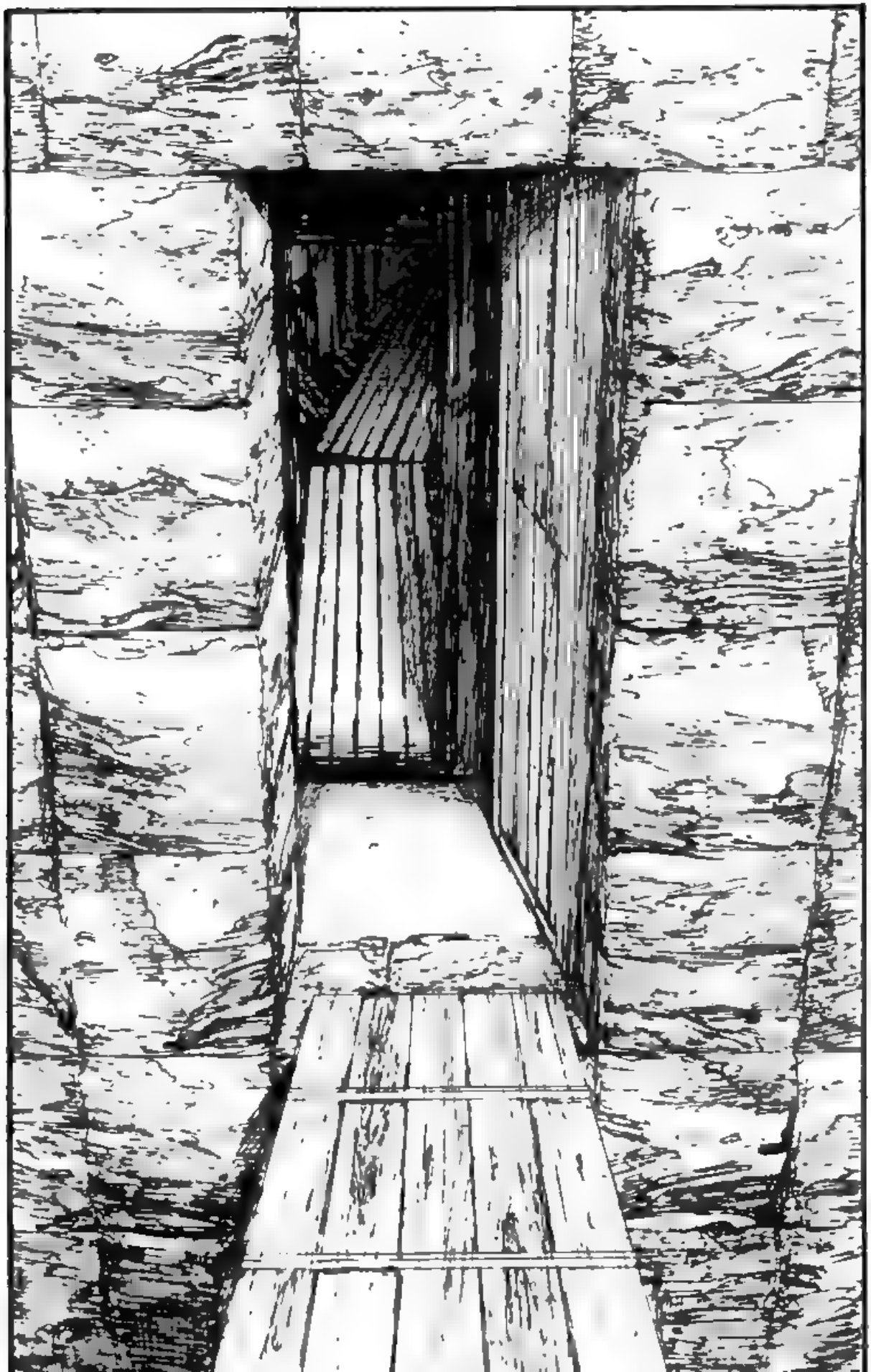
"...IT MIGHT JUST BE THIS YOUTH."

...DEWA-NOSUKE'S BODY AS YOU DID.
...YOU FOLLOWED MŌZEN'S LEAD. YET NO *NORMAL* DOCTOR COULD HAVE REMADE...
TRUE...
...HHF. WELL, I WASN'T MISTAKEN.
...HAVE FAILED *SOONER*.
I'LL TELL YOU WHY.
YOU SHOULD...
...THAT WAS *UNFOR-TUNATE*.
...BECAUSE YOUR FIRST PRISONER LIVED SO *LONG*...
BECAUSE IT ALL WENT BETTER THAN YOU'D DREAMED...
ONLY NOW, I THINK...

...DEWA-NOSUKE CHANGED.
HE STOPPED BEING A MERE SPECIMEN.
SO NOW... YOUR CONCERN FOR YOUR PATIENTS LEAVES YOU PARA-LYZED.
YOU REPEAT THE SAME PROCEDURE BY ROTE. NOW, YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN A SECOND-RATE COUNTRY DOCTOR!
BUT... BUT, SIR...
TAKE MO-ZEN...
WHEN HE VIVISECTED MANJI, HE SAID HE PRE-PARED...
..BY CUTTING OPEN OTTERS
BURAN-DO.

YOU THINK YOU'RE CUTTING UP *HUMANS.*
THINK OF THEM AS BEASTS... AS *OTTERS.*
...WAS *COR-RECT.*
THAT...
THAT'S THE RIGHT ATTITUDE. THEY'RE FROM *DEATH ROW.*
THEY'RE FATED TO DIE. THE JUDGES KILL THEM, NOT YOU.
INDEED, *YOUR* WORK GIVES THEM A FLICKER-ING HOPE OF LIFE...BUT YOU SHOULDN'T LET GUILT TROUBLE YOU.
TO THE CONTRARY, YOU SHOULD BE *PROUD!*

YOUR CONSCIENCE CAN'T SAVE THEM, BURANDO. ONLY KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNIQUE CAN!
THOSE... AND A HEART OF STEEL.
ARE YOU UP TO IT... BURANDO?
.....
.....
TOMOR-ROW. NOON.
THEY'LL BRING NUMBER SEVEN.



BURANDO-
DONO?
ENOUGH
COAGULANT?
HAH?
OH...

...!
UHHG...
UOHH HHHHH!
STOP!
A-ASAEMON-DONO! WAIT! PLEASE WAIIITT!!
?!

BURANDO-DONO...?
OOPSIES!
HEY!! WHAT THE HELL'RE YOU--
DON'T DO IT! HE'LL DIE!
DIEEE!
BURAN-DO...
I'M SORRY. I'M... SO SORRY.
SO... SO AFRAID...
P-PEOPLE...
...PEOPLE AREN'T OTTERS...
.....
.....?!
YAIEEEE !!

OWW! GET OFF ME!
BURANDO-DONO!
"THUS IT ENDS...?"
THE OTTER'S WEE LIFE, WEIGHS UPON WAVERING SOUL, THE WOULD-BE DOCTOR.
HMM! IT WORKS!
HABAKI-DONO--
CAN "OTTER" BE THE KIGO?
BURANDO AYAME! I FIND YOU GUILTY OF BANNED RESEARCH!
IMPRISON-MENT-- FOR LIFE!
AWAIT YOUR FATE IN YOUR CELL!
TO BE CONTINUED...!

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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

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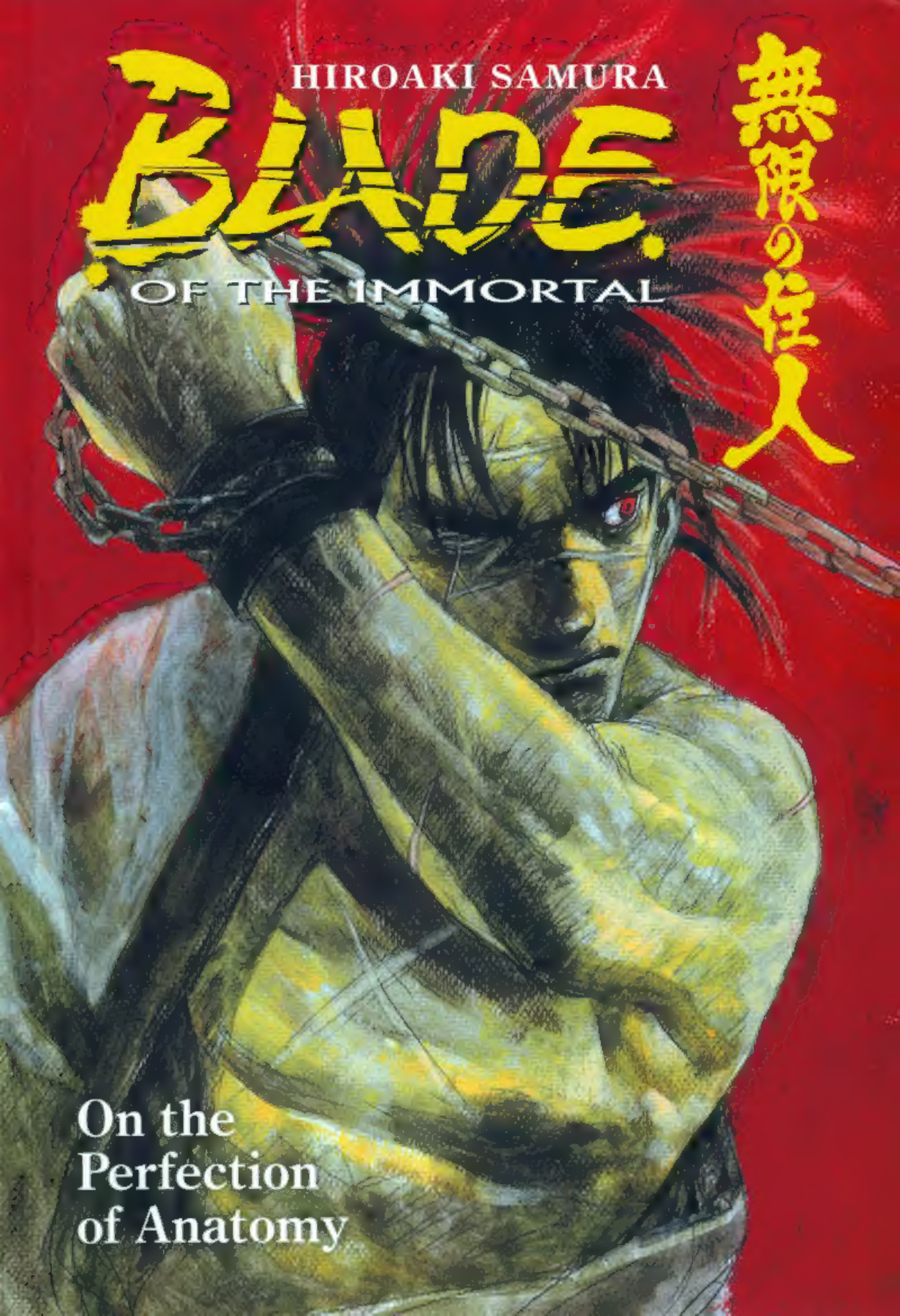

On the Perfection of Anatomy